

**SALVATION AS HEALING?**  
**An analysis of Jesse Mugambi and Mercy Oduyoye's Soteriologies**  
**in the context of African Prosperity Gospels**

by

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## **Declaration**

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## **Dedication**

This thesis is dedicated to the glory of God Almighty and my dear parents through whom I developed the desire of loving God that I have been able to stand till now. To my late father, Rev Umaru Kure, in particular, I would have wished if you were still here to attest to what you embedded in me from childhood. Great thanks, however, to my mother for believing in my abilities.

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## Abstract

This thesis is a study of the doctrine of salvation with particular reference to therapeutic interpretations. Discourses about salvation often center on that which comes in the hereafter, with less emphasis on the here-and-now dimensions of salvation, which has resulted in disparities in the interpretation of salvation within Christian theology. One of these divisions come from circles that embrace the gospel of prosperity, which focuses on wealth and health as proof of salvation, which is irreconcilable with the life experiences of some believers. Therefore, it has become of the utmost importance that salvation is understood properly and more broadly to bringing clarity and avoid such disparities. With a view to presenting a far-reaching perspective on salvation, the current study critically investigates the notable works of two African theologians selected from many others, whose scholarly contributions to African Christian theology in general, and salvation in particular, have been remarkable.

Chapter One sets out the background to the study and introduces certain concepts that are central to the study, so as to allow coherence in the rest of the thesis. Salvation is one of the essential Christian doctrines, but misconceptions in this regard have made it difficult to ascertain or to articulate its meaning appropriately. The previous view gave rise to different ways of explaining salvation, particularly within circles that embrace the gospel of prosperity, which sees health and wealth as proof of salvation. Unfortunately, no matter how important those forms of salvation are, many believers who have experienced salvation are not wealthy and do not enjoy good health. The above perspective calls for an integrative engagement with other theologians so as to present a balanced and broader view of salvation.

For the purpose of considering salvation through a much wider lens, Jesse Mugambi's and Mercy Oduyoye's interpretations of salvation are examined in chapters 3 and four respectively. Mugambi is a Kenyan Anglican theologian whose salvific quest centres on reconstruction as a paradigm that befits Africa in the 21st century – rather than liberation, which has often been the norm. He discusses reconstruction as a form of salvation that covers social and structural dimensions, thereby presenting an understanding of salvation that is much broader than restricting it to either salvation from sin or the acquisition of wealth and health. Oduyoye is a Ghanaian Methodist theologian who focuses her research work on the well-being of women and children in particular, but also that of society. Her research concerns more than the human quest for well-being – also that of society, with particular attention to justice and equality. Shaping an enabling society where individuals are accepted and treated with dignity would go a long

way to healing many of humanity's problems, particularly those experienced by women and children, which is considered to be a form of salvation in the context of this study.

Chapter 5 draws some conclusions from the preceding chapters and suggests three models for a therapeutic interpretation of salvation, namely reconciliation, transformation, and empowerment.

Concerning the prosperity gospel's perception of salvation and that of Mugambi and Oduyoye, the study concludes that none of those approaches is wrong in itself, but all could offer a better interpretation of salvation by including other perceptions. The study suggests that none of the approaches should be followed exclusively without including others. Integration would afford a balanced view of salvation that comprises different facets of life with particular reference to the therapeutic sense. In that way, the disparity in understanding salvation can be bridged.

## Opsomming

Hierdie tesis is 'n studie van die leerstelling van redding, met spesifieke verwysing na terapeutiese interpretasies. Diskoerse rondom verlossing is dikwels toegespits op dit wat in die hiernamaals wag, met minder klem op die hier en nou wat die dimensies van verlossing betref, en dit het tot verdeeldheid in die interpretasie van verlossing binne die Christelike teologie gelei. Een van hierdie punte van verdeeldheid het ontstaan uit kringe wat die welvaartevangelie aanhang, met die klem op welvaart en gesondheid as bewyse van verlossing, wat onversoenbaar met die geleefde ervarings van sommige gelowiges is. Daarom is 'n behoorlike en wyer begrip van verlossing van groot belang, sodat 'n sekere helderte verkry en soortgelyke verdeeldheid vermy kan word. Om 'n wyer perspektief op verlossing te bied, doen hierdie studie 'n kritiese ondersoek na die belangrike werke van twee teoloë van Afrika wat uit talle ander moontlikhede uitgekies is en wie se vakkundige bydraes tot die Christelike teologie van Afrika in die algemeen, en verlossing in die besonder, diep spore getrap het.

Hoofstuk 1 skets die agtergrond vir die studie en stel bepaalde konsepte bekend wat sentraal tot die studie staan, sodat die res van die tesis 'n sinvolle geheel vorm. Verlossing is een van die wesenlike Christelike leerstellings, maar die dwalinge daaroor het dit moeilik gemaak om die betekenis daarvan behoorlik te verwoord. Dit het tot gevolg gehad dat verlossing op verskillende wyses uiteengesit word, veral binne kringe wat die welvaartevangelie aanhang, wat gesondheid en welvaart as 'n bewys van verlossing sien. Alhoewel hierdie soort verlossing belangrik is, is daar talle gelowiges wat verlossing ervaar het maar nie welvarend is en goeie gesondheid geniet nie. Daarom is daar die behoefte aan 'n geïntegreerde benadering wat ander teoloë betrek ten einde 'n gebalanseerde en omvattender siening van verlossing te bied.

In 'n poging om verlossing deur 'n veel wyer lens te beskou, ondersoek hoofstuk 3 en 4 Jesse Mugambi en Mercy Oduyoye se interpretasies van verlossing. Mugambi is 'n Anglikaanse teoloog uit Kenia wie se soeke na verlossing toegespits is op rekonstruksie as 'n paradigma wat by die Afrika van die 21ste eeu pas – eerder as bevryding, wat dikwels die norm was. Hy bespreek rekonstruksie as 'n vorm van verlossing wat sosiale en strukturele dimensies omvat, en bied daarmee 'n opvatting van verlossing wat veel wyer strek as om dit tot óf verlossing van sonde óf die verwerping van welvaart en gesondheid te beperk. Oduyoye is 'n Metodistiese teoloog uit Ghana wie se navorsingswerk fokus op die welstand van vroue en kinders in die besonder, sowel as dié van die samelewing. Haar navorsing omvat meer as die mens se soeke na welstand – ook die welstand van die samelewing, met besondere aandag aan geregtigheid

en gelykheid. Deur 'n samelewing te kweek waar individue aanvaar en met waardigheid behandel word, sou veel kon bydra tot die verligting van allerlei probleme van die mensdom, veral dié wat vroue en kinders ondervind, wat in die konteks van hierdie studie as 'n vorm van verlossing beskou word.

Hoofstuk 5 maak sekere gevolgtrekkings uit die voorafgaande en doen drie modelle vir die terapeutiese interpretasie van verlossing aan die hand, naamlik versoening, transformasie en bemagtiging.

Die studie sluit af deur na die welvaartevangelie se persepsie van verlossing asook dié van Mugambi en Oduyoye te verwys en te sê dat geeneen van daardie benaderings op sigself foutief is nie, maar dat verlossing beter verduidelik kan word deur die ander opvattinge in te sluit. Die studie stel voor dat geeneen van die benaderings uitsluitlik, sonder om die ander in te sluit, gevolg behoort te word nie. Integrasie maak 'n ewewigtige siening van verlossing moontlik wat verskillende lewensfasette, veral in die terapeutiese betekenis, insluit. Sodoende kan die verdeling in die verstaan van verlossing oorbrug word.



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## Chapter 1: Introduction

### 1.1 Background of the Study

As a concept, salvation has become a highly debatable topic in recent times. One would have imagined that there is a consensus on its meaning and application, but this is not the case because of a multiplicity of structures to seeking it. Among others, these structures include social, political, and economic desires, as well as the quest for spiritual fulfillment. However, as these factors influence the intensity of human quest for salvation, only a few research has tried to understand this from a religious perspective beyond attributing it to the life hereafter. This points to the need to understand salvation from the everyday realities and complexities associated with it. Not doing so would imply problematizing the meaning of salvation without considering the practical implications it has on the everyday lives of people seeking it. This paints salvation as a ‘fabulous Ghost’- something about which everyone has heard, but no one has seen instead of as something with practical reality (Ngong, 2004:362; cf. Brand, 2012). In this regard, salvation includes practical realities which extend beyond theoretical and unseen (hereafter) connotations, and beyond its conceptualization by prosperity gospel as worldly success and attainment. For limiting it to such views limits our understanding of the world, the healing of its ills, the hope of a new heaven and a new earth, and with the transcendent perfection of human life in the kingdom of God (Heron, 1989:107).

Several efforts of seeking salvation from more practical terms abound. One prominent example is a recent campaign in South Africa Tagged ‘save South Africa.’ Before it became a democratic sovereign state, South Africa has had to struggle against racial oppression and exploitation; a scenario called apartheid which was known and drew the attention of the world. The result of such struggle brought about the emergence of a democratic South African state where hope for equity, a rainbow nation, human dignity, and justice for the marginalized, exploited, discriminated became the priority. However, with the reality at present, such promises have been substituted and replaced with corruption, injustices, misappropriation, which is resulting in agitation to the campaign ‘Save South Africa.’ For most marginalized as at the time of apartheid have not convincingly seen the difference at present with the reality of events they face. Instead of experiencing and having the sense of belonging as a taste of a new democratic republic where everyone could flourish, it is the contrast, where inequality is on the increase, poverty level rising, and unemployment rate also on the increase. Thus an indication of things not working well in the public sphere as such campaigns are pointers to the expected and the

just society that others have had to sacrifice their lives for its cause. The aspiration for a better South Africa -which is a description of its salvation from the present realities- would come to actualization only through commitment to the vision of the Constitution as ‘to heal the divisions of the past and establish a society based on democratic values, social justice, and fundamental human rights.’<sup>1</sup> With a commitment to that vision by all citizens, it could result to the South Africa that everyone anticipates which would indicate the actualization of salvation from the public for both individuals and structures while allowing room for flourishing.

Similarly, the understanding of salvation as a concept within the Christian circle has always and is still a point of interest, both to its proper and broader understanding and its application to practical life situation. As one of the central themes in Christian theology, salvation has been a subject of interest in different theological discussions and through several approaches. One of the reasons for being an interesting theme relates to its perception within different religious grouping both theistic and non-theistic traditions, thus making salvific discourses central and a subject of interest (Ngong, 2004:363). A topic of interest because its involvement in different spheres of life and other religions other than Christian religion reveals various concepts regarding its meaning and application, thus intensifying its centrality. With the claims and promises of a meaningful life with salvific experience, the quest for religious affiliation which promises hope for a life of meaning grows, thus becoming a driving force to religious aspiration. Hence, living one with no hesitation to ascribe one of the reasons why there is continual clamoring for religion (2004:363).

With the growing concern for salvation and its centrality, there seems to be a shift from the Christian view of the term. For if what is salvific relates to proffering relief or deliverances from a life that is dehumanizing to an affirming life then it should result in some celebrations and taken as good news in that sense, which would portray what salvation entails in Christian literature- the gospels- in particular. However, with various divisions within the Christian theological circle, the idea of salvation has had some shifts, resulting in different interpretations and applications within the same circle. As such it has led to series of paradoxes in ascertaining whether or not salvation could still be taken to mean ‘good news’ with practical implications. Perhaps one of such divisions with the different portrayal of the meaning of salvation is the

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<sup>1</sup> For information on ‘save South Africa, go to [www.savesouthafrica.org.za](http://www.savesouthafrica.org.za) or [info@savesouthafrica.org](mailto:info@savesouthafrica.org).

one from the circle of the prosperity gospels with emphasis that wealth and health are all that salvation involves.

Several books and many captivating statements on buildings, billboards, abound on streets portraying hope and promises for solutions to different human conditions. One example of such books is one with a title “*Health, Wealth, and Happiness: Has prosperity gospel overshadowed the gospel of Christ?*”.<sup>2</sup> Such statements occupy the hearts of many who see that all there is to human existence concerning salvation entails health and wealth which when actualized would grant them meaning to life. As important as that could be, it is ideal that there exists a quest for better understanding to identify salvation with correspondence to the ideal human realities, taken and accepted as good news. The good news they say is the sole goal of salvation to all of the humanity, but with the rising of other interpretations, the understanding of what is right about the good news becomes difficult. As such, makes the quest more intense.

Such is indeed, a growing concern. However, with such concern in mind, the search for better understanding or better still, a broader perception of the doctrine of salvation as good news with practical implications to life issues become a point to ponder. Conceptualizing salvation theology in the presence of prosperity gospel in this study takes the contemporary African contexts as a point of departure.<sup>3</sup> It is because of the often misunderstood notions of salvation which the prosperity gospel preachers propagate as we shall further discuss from a much broader historical sense of their development, growth, presence, and the effect of prosperity thinking and preaching in African contexts. This study, however, invites a critique of some of the misunderstandings of the concept of salvation by prosperity preachers as well as the misunderstanding of the proper vision of God for human life in light of God’s salvation. However, it also may have to do with some of the traditional structures of life especially in African contexts that hinder the flourishing of life, thus problematizing the understanding of the doctrine of salvation.

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<sup>2</sup> Jones, D. W., & Woodbridge, R.S. 2011.

<sup>3</sup> The term Africa as will be used throughout this study require some understanding. Africa as a continent is "vast, complex, and differentiated – such that we should never pretend to speak representatively and comprehensively about Africa" (Ford & Muers, 2005:486; Maluleke, 2000:196). Perhaps, "it is important to be conscious of the vastness, divisions, affinities of Africa" (2005:486). This is to say; there is no one single Africa. With that in mind, the reader should know that what is applicable in one part of Africa varies considerably with another part \_though with various degrees of commonality regarding living experiences.

For effectiveness in such inquiry two notably African theologians were selected seeing that their meaningful contributions to the growing quest for understanding salvation are relevant to the study. The two conversation partners Jesse Mugambi and Mercy Oduyoye, major their research on reconstruction/reconciliation and salvation/restoration of both individuals and the society respectively. Their understanding of salvation would serve as pointers to the study and the perception of salvation in light of the proponents of African prosperity gospels and their interpretation. As argued in the survey unlike the two dialogue partners, prosperity gospel theology has a different view of human existence and its relation to salvation and practical applications. The study in focus thus seeks to support the arguments that prosperity gospel emphasizes on material possession. Notably, wealth and health as these two connote the presence of salvation in one's life. That is carried out through a reconceptualization of salvation as that which encompasses all other facets of life instead of resting on health and wealth as pointers to salvation solely.

## **1.2 Preliminary Survey of Existing Research on Salvation Theology**

From an existential perspective, Wright (2013:2) rightly observes the dilemma of creation in the world of God as that which depicts life as a struggle for survival. In such a case, many different creatures engage in the quest for the flourishing of life in the form of a frequent need for "deliverance." It reflects the weakness and vulnerability of life in the world which has been the result of human sin (Gen. 3) which makes the need for salvation necessary and urgent. Human fall into sin is understood as the tragic event in the world that distorts the relationship between humanity and God which also drastically affects other aspects of life regarding the physical, social, psychological, emotional, and economic status of being whole and toward flourishing. It necessitates the understanding and application of salvation holistically, thus considering its liberating effects regarding "redemption, healing and transformation" (McClendon, 1994:103) of life. From this point of view, we could agree with the fact that "God saves people in a variety of physical, material, and temporal ways from all kinds of need, danger, and threat"(Wright, 2013:9) to create an enabling environment for human better existence.

Deliverance from the above factors does not only enable a better environment for human existence but also, brings back the distortion caused. The liberating work of God functions in this direction such that, our liberation is verified by "restoring our distorted dignity and rights into a new communion of reconciliation with God" (Moe, 2016:325). Thus indicating as to the

broadness of the said distortion which requires a broader view the liberation takes. More so, would result in the fact that God's new creation/soteriology is holistic mainly because humankind is a holistic creature. That also makes sin and its effect holistic such that it distorts the holistic nature of humanity (Moe, 2016:328). Perhaps, because of the vastness therein God's view of salvation, "Jesus's use of abundant life and salvation are held together for the present and the future" (2016:329). This concept of abundance is often mistaken to be prosperity, thus possess an opposition to Liberation Theology which sees abundance regarding "liberation from economic exploitation by receiving back their dignity" (2016:329). Interestingly, this notion of abundance taken to have different meanings is put properly by Jesus to be "physical and spiritual healing" (2016:329) and not referring to make the poor rich.

Gerrit Brand understood salvation as the dynamic(s) which human beings attain their real, while what constitutes the need to attain the human good can be clear only in the light of what the human good is (1999:196), which he describes as "full humanity" (1999:197). Salvation, from a classical theological point of view, has to do with "the death of Christ and God's forgiveness of human sin" (McIntyre, 1992:24). Brand thus summarizes that salvific faith means, not only a recognition of one's sinfulness but also, a refusal to bear patiently, or to accept in any way, the sin of dehumanization committed against oneself by others (1999:198). Such salvific understanding illustrates the difference involving 'sin committed' which normally calls for salvation and the 'sin committed against the other.' These two when understood fully, both relate to salvation which goes beyond the hereafter but includes the here and now. Thus informing what understanding of the salvation in holistic terms is with therapeutic relevance.

In light of the interfacing components of salvation namely, healing, redemption, reconciliation and transformation, salvation as a divine act of grace could be referred to as "a distinct new beginning in the life of each genuine Christian believer"(McClendon 1994:103; cf. Davidson & Rae 2011: 1). Thus in a therapeutic sense, Salvation is the healing of all brokenness in the human life through the genuine love and interest of God in providing salvation as a solution to the problem of sin. Thus seen as God's choice to give life and restore it even from a state of its brokenness which demonstrates how God transcends human choices. Since humans chose "death rather than life" ( Davidson & Rae 2011:1) by God's will that liberates, heals and restores humanity from the state of fall, death, and alienation from God and each other.



In fact, one example of the life calling for restoration is an aspect mostly neglected or not often giving attention when it comes to salvation is the psychological imbalance.<sup>4</sup> In an instance when negligence becomes a norm such that ‘the power of God’s grace’ is not felt amongst “people whose hearts and minds have been wounded by violence” (Jones, 2009: viii) it creates a notion that could lead to some loneliness or depressed life. Such Jones adds, results in a cognitive/psychic overwhelming breakdown where it becomes difficult for victims to experience the healing power of God’s grace because their internal capacities have been broken (2009: viii-ix). Thus resulting in untimely effects such as “grievous wound, a loss of self, breakdown in normal knowing and feeling, and a paralyzing lack of agency in the threat of the harm suffered” (2009:15). Such victims who could be living members of Christian communities desire some remedies toward their experiences which would contribute to healing their imaginations (2009:20). Thus a concept of forgiveness could be relevant. Such forgiveness as suggested “ought to be focused on the reconciliation of brokenness, the restoration of communion with God, with one another, and with creation” (Schweitzer, 2010:833). Therefore echoes God’s vision for humanity which entails “a redeemed humanity where all persons live in right relation to God and one another” (Daniels, 2016:246; cf. Jones, 2000:54) which leads them to perspectives in hope to a flourishing future (Jones, 2009:21).

The preceding description presents with its effects of neglecting psychological equilibrium and the idea of restorative healing of such disorders whenever they occur. However, attention ought to focus on what is often believe about whether there are differences between physical and mental healing. At some points, there are assumptions often that, when physical healing occurs, mental healing follows naturally and that as time goes, all wounds heal (Jones, 2009:1). It could not be the case with violence for instance, whose adverse effect cuts deeply in the mind which could make it difficult for physical healing to heal effectively (2009:1). The mental-like form of healing here would require some language which “can reach straight into the heart of the imagination” (2009:21) where the effect of the damage has to do with the mind and not with the physical body. In fact, such mental disorder can leave one without the world, without speech, stories, memory, community, future, or a sense of self, thus a call to theology to re-narrate what ought to inform our imagination (2009:21).

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<sup>4</sup> This could mean different things to different contexts of conversations but to this study, it relates to an injury or wound inflicted by an external hostile force which threatens to destroy one’s physical body, mind, and the emotions (Jones, 2009:12) thus creating in the victim, elements of psychological disorder.

The ‘reshaping of imagination’ is illustrated in the power of grace which Jones sees as ‘the task of theology’ (2009:21). Thus affirming theology as the language that both can describe the power and evokes it in the lives of people by telling them grace-filled stories of new imaginings (2009:21-22). With these illustrations, she concludes that, as far as the victim painfully suffers the shattering effects of trauma, so also is the healing power of grace is unique to each imagination it soothes and heals (2009:22). The preceding presents us with some clarity that salvation takes different forms depending on the context the consideration focuses.

It is noteworthy here that the concept of salvation is multilayered and multifaceted which makes its application to depend on what aspects of it takes center stage of urgency and need, seeing that, “salvation has always occupied a central place in Christian theology” (Brand, 1999:193). Thus salvation is not just an act of “deliverance of creatures from the conditions of creatureliness, nor release of humans from restrictions of their worldly environment, nor emancipation of the spiritual from the corruptions of the physical” (Davidson & Rae, 2011:3). Yes, as important as that is, salvation expresses itself as an excellent pattern of living that is personally rewarding, obtainable through “moral-psychological flourishing... that enhances societal well-being” as well as individuals also (Charry, 2010: xi; 2002:176). This form of well-being illustrates and brings with it an enablement where “we discover who we are with God about God’s image bearers” (2010:157). It also informs us that “God is the psychological and moral foundation, not only of personal fulfillment but also of just societies” (2002:176).

Additionally, it would serve this study well to acknowledge the significance of the unbiased societies and what characterizes them as such, and their relation to salvation. Perhaps, Christian theology says Charry, “lacks a substantial doctrine of human flourishing” (2010:157) yet, the perception of knowing God enhances our true self-love which is “the healing of disordered love” (2010:157) thus making us healed persons. For it is only the healed person she says, “can love well, and loving well is the basis of flourishing life” (2010:158). This idea of self-love Charry says, has a goal to help people know, love, and enjoy God that they may flourish as that is the foundation of a healthy and prosperous social fabric for Civilisation (2002:176). The previous point demystifies the claims that “theology is not about living in the world” (2004a:19). Perhaps, one of the factors that make theology relevant in the life here and now and not restricted to the life hereafter is an expected experience in a society devoid of disordered love, namely happiness.

The relevance she places on happiness is that it emphasizes beyond the “temporal understanding of happiness but eschatological, with salvation centered in sanctification” (Charry, 2010: x). Salvation for Charry is simply “growing into the wisdom of divine love and enjoying oneself in the process” (2010: x) which relates to what she sees as a happy life. Which to her has to do with “loving God, obeying his commandments, and dwelling in the house of the Lord” (2010:248). Thus attesting to the importance of happiness to human life which Charry says “to discount the importance of human happiness is to misunderstand theology and its purpose” (2004:19).

However, as this study progresses, it seeks to agree with one of the explanations of salvation that will further expand later. An explanation which sees salvation as “the restoration of creation and creatures holistically-human and non-human, physical as well as spiritual, to their intended state” (Davidson & Rae, 2011:3, 86) in other words, as all encompassing. In addition to the preceding description, it is wise to situate salvation not as a concept that affects the restoration of humanity only but as that which includes God’s creation in its entirety as “is God’s intention for creation” (Charry, 2010: xi). The idea of all encompassing view of conceptualizing salvation will help us see its meaning as it relates to health and healing.

The theme of health and healing as observed by Ernst Conradie “is a highly interdisciplinary one” (2006:3) and “have been topics of personal and abiding interest to everyone over the years” (Wilkinson, 1998: v). Consequently, could result in some difficulty if one particular discipline attempt giving some explanation. It is because one sees the variation in every discipline such as sociology, psychology, medical sciences, pharmaceutical sciences, having different interpretations to it. Regarding Christian theology, which has for centuries in the past seen as “the queen of the sciences” (Conradie, 2006:3), it is not always clear today whether “Christian theology can contribute anything worthwhile to such discourses” (2006:3). For even inside and outside the church “many are not so confident that the churches’ engagement in the field of health and healing is essential” (WCC, 2012:132) in any way to have a contribution to make to the debate. In response to these views, Conradie notes that “Christian theology will certainly do well to listen to other discourses, but will not be able to contribute to the debate only by baptizing insights emerging from other disciplines” (2006:3). In other words, though Christian theology may not speak the language of natural sciences to contribute to the discussion but will speak from the theological point.

One of the often one-sided perceptions of health and healing is seen within modern medicine with different specifications on what health entails.<sup>5</sup> One of those ways of articulating health rests solely on “the reunion of the broken surfaces of bones when they have been fractured” (Wilkinson, 1998:1), which makes them prefer to see their work as “curing or treating, rather than healing” (1998:1). Such is a view indicating that health and healing apply to the curative dimensions of the human body but fails to see it as “that which extends to all areas of human life and being” (1998:2). Seeing health and healing only in the confines of humans while neglecting the environment, intensify the myopic view of the whole idea of the term. With that in mind, and with the quest for identifying health though spoken differently from different perspectives, theology as Conradie mentions above has a voice to speak. One of such Christian theological views Wilkinson describes as “the enabling of a man to function as a whole by God’s will for him and the restoration to the normality of deranged physical functions” (1998:2). Thus presenting that it does concern the whole of the human being and not just one aspect of it such as seen in modern medicine and also in other disciplines. Such approach to health does widen the horizon from what modern medicine ascribes to it, thus affirming the wideness therein understanding the concept from various perspectives.

The fact that health and healing are interdisciplinary issues suggests that their interrelated understanding is vital as the overarching concern with human life, specifically regarding the wholeness of life. Thus, health as wholeness “has opened a new emphasis on new harmony and reconciliation with the self, with other human beings, and with God” (Potter, 1981:337). It also involves “a dynamic state of well-being of the individual and the society; of physical, spiritual, economic, political and social ideal, of being in harmony with each other, with the material environment and with God” (1981:334). Thus, testifying to salvation which is both cosmic in scope and utterly focused on everyday living (Ford, 1991:116). With the above purview on wholeness, however, Charry summarizes that “wholeness is moral, social, and emotional wellness” (2010:158), thus affirming what comprises of harmony.

From the above description of wholeness, these two words; harmony, and reconciliation are used in this section to explain the idea of wholeness. The choice of these words is in connection with what has said above, which would help us integrate them into a deeper understanding of

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<sup>5</sup> Other descriptions that in use in modern medicine for health or healing, Wilkinson says, include ‘non-conventional therapy’ ‘alternative medicine’ ‘complementary medicine’ or ‘fringe medicine’ (1998:1).

wholeness as the study progresses, seeing that the two words are central to what constitutes wholeness. Thus, harmony and reconciliation are concepts which help us to understand that “health is a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity” (WHO, 2012:137). In another sense, “health is determined by the existence of an inner and outer balance (harmony)...a harmony of mind, soul, and body, and of one’s relationship with the environment and with other human beings” (WCC, 2012:137). Health from this point of view gives a better description other than the often perception in other circles – say medical science- whose emphasis stands solely in the absence of sickness while little or no recognition on the wholeness of life. Perhaps, such assertions only limit salvation to the good health of an individual rather than its consideration which covers all of the creation – an idea which speaks of wholeness (Peters, 2009:301).

Increasingly, the identification of inclusiveness in salvific understanding “seems to be built right into human nature a drive toward wholeness” (Peters, 2009:303). With the advancement in human innovations, human life is in the process of frequent fragmentation which has gone as far as separating disciplines and most importantly, our concept of healing into physical and spiritual (2009:303). So, with the above premise indicating human drive toward wholeness, it becomes apparent, however, to give some affirmations which would also take a look at the challenges that have resulted due to modern human innovation. To that end, contributions toward the drive for wholeness “signals that we have had enough of this divisiveness and that we want to put things back together again” (2009:303).

The other conceptualization with a focus on the attainment of wholeness could be taken further in making efforts to bridging a particular gap said to have contributed to the divisiveness mentioned above. That element is one which dichotomizes between physical and spiritual health or simply put, ‘medical science and Christian theology’ which could demand a conceptual framework of understanding toward human health (Peters, 2009:304). Despite what medical science sees and treats a person as an organism or a broken machine (2009:305), with the Christian theological conception of salvation as wholeness, the two divisive fields could undergo a form of amalgamation with a unified perception namely, holistic healing. Hence, holistic healing involves “a strong commitment to change social and economic conditions that perpetuate ill- health” (2009:307). Thus carries a conception of the health which does not focus on humans solely but also the physical environment which places physical well-being in the context of one’s total well-being (2009:311).

Perhaps, health is agreeably an “ideal” in which “‘social well-being’...can be achieved not merely by individuals but also by the society in which these people live” (Moltmann, 1993:271). Such concerns for health within a social context expands the relationship between the health of a person or just individuals but also, to the health of the society. If this concern and perspective are taken seriously then, individuals would neither experience neglect within a society regarding the provision of their health or the overlooking of the society within human interaction. In regards to the necessity therein providing proper health care to the individual, Moltmann declares that “health becomes a human right to which everyone is entitled. It is quite true Moltmann declares, that health is a fundamental human right” (1993:272), seeing its inclusiveness in human existence and relation to the society, it goes beyond an option as it has to do with the right of everyone and in fact, that which is fundamental. He continues, for health to be a basic human right, it implies that “to be a person in the fullest sense of the word is to be healthy” (1993:272). Any violation, denial or neglect of the health of a person is a sign of a broken sense of the harmony of life which requires healing as a form of restoration. In such cases, “the healing we require is one which combines both a rigorous accountability to our different communities and histories with a reaching out across differences to ‘the other,’ seeking collaboration in the cause of healing” (Ackermann & Bone-Storm (eds.), 1998:91).

In connecting salvation to health, David Ford explains that salvation is the root sense of health which comprise of “physical, social, political, economic, environmental, mental, spiritual, moral and so on” (1991:1; Rushdoony, 1983:1). For this salvation to be in connection with the God of creation he declares, “then none of its dimensions can be ignored” (1991:1). Additionally, “wholeness, health, and salvation are concepts which belong together” (Peters, 1991:297; cf. Kalu, 2008:263), which also strengthens the fact that emphasizes the non-dichotomization of the two concepts.

Furthermore, Graham Ward taking his understanding of salvation from how Christians are saved says, salvation (*salus* in Latin) to mean “health or fashionably, well-being” (Ward, 2014:1000). Though salvation concerns ‘being saved’ (2014:1000) and as it includes health in this discussion goes beyond the conventional understanding namely, to ‘be saved from sin.’ Instead, it includes other aspects of life which could speak of wholeness and perhaps, would guarantee “the quality of transformed life” (Ford, 1991:107) thus enabling the flourishing of life.

Some of the aspects of life that need a proper address from salvation theology are the emotions of fear and shame Ward declares because those could tend to hinder human flourishing seeing that they are elements of distress which disrupt the harmony of life (Ward, 2014:1010). He thus explains that the orientation of *salus* “is participation in the Godhead, for the Christian living ‘*en Christo*’ has positive effects which can exist despite adverse effects of negative feelings and experiences of life.” For example, “there can be a pain but hope, there can be suffering but peace, there can be grief yet joy” (2014:1011). The above characterization understood theologically explains that “this coexistence of negative and positive affect does not create cognitive or emotional dissonance... Rather, the positive effect is fundamentally that which is enjoyed by God Himself, God intratrinitarian communion with Godself” (2014:1011). In instances where fear and shame as emotions undergo disruption, the tendency to experiencing harmony becomes an impossibility such that calls for salvation that Ward describes.

Salvation as healing connotes an idea that “the therapeutic significance of redemption lies in the healing of men and women in their essential being. In the becoming whole of what has been separated by death, and in the universal elimination of the germ of decay and mortality” (Moltmann, 1993:108). This healing Says Vigen Guroian means “salvation and peace” (2004:333), while salvation means “integrity, authenticity, fullness, wholeness, realized totality; whereas peace including well-being, wholeness, having the strength to be oneself.”<sup>6</sup> Moreover, what is right for one person applies to the whole community and indeed for the world” (2004:333). Healing also as viewed by Kalu “is about liberation from all that dehumanizes; it is the restoration of life” (2008:264). The essence of this presents God’s original intention for creation that humanity could live as God’s image bearers as a form of glorifying God, which Kelsey expresses in his statement that “the glory of God is human made fully alive” (2008:2).

However, in the context where salvation is exclusively understood as “how we can survive the last judgment” (Nürnberg, 2005:97), it neglects other aspects of life requiring salvation as well. Such that the salvation of here and now becomes without relevance since the focus goes to the ‘hereafter.’ There are indeed other phases of it which do not only see eternity, but the ‘here and now, thus results in the knowledge that “there are people in hell here and now, in this

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<sup>6</sup> Kalu, 2008:265 emphasizes that to experience healing is not just to experience freedom from sickness and illness, or problems and suffering. He adds is rather a sign of what the Old Testament calls ‘shalom’ (peace, salvation) as the establishment or restoration of right and reconciled relationships, now and at the end of time.



life, and we have a responsibility for them. It is the hell of physical pain, mental despair, and spiritual guilt and the church can do something about those things” (Gowan, 2004:14). Thus, suggests that salvation does not stop at receiving warnings of the life after death while making less or no emphasis on the salvation of here and now which ought to focus on the healing of the immediate problems in human lived experiences.

The concept of salvation from a theological point of view requires the knowledge that the Greek *sōtēria* (salvation; soundness, safety) and the Latin *Soter* (Saviour) in Christian theology are words referring to the issues of salvation (McFarland *et al.*, 2001:479; Lapsley, 1972:35). The category of the study of salvation (Soteriology) as it is in Christian theology is indeed “the heart of the Christian faith” (Davidson, 2011:1), and a “dominant theme of religions” (Kärkkäinen, 2004:4). Such that “soteriology, the doctrine of salvation, occupies a privileged place in theology” (2004:4). Some concepts often associated with Christian soteriological doctrines, however, include;

[g]race, justification, sanctification, reconciliation, atonement, redemption, predestination, righteousness, works, as well as the cross, sin, and salvation, [as they] are rubrics employed historically in addressing the saving work of God. Who in Christ was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us (McFarland *et al.*, 2011:480).

Another important element central to the Christian understanding is,

salvation depicted in the gospels is not one of the escape from the physical world or lack of contact and antipathy between creatures. It is a picture of a world at peace and at one, peace in which the rampages of the stuff of the universe are healed (Davidson, 2011:79).

This salvation is said to mean “living as free though finite creatures under God; and as ‘loving God and fellows,’ ‘it is living in the kingdom of God’” (Kaufman, 1968:389). Salvation is also understood not only as “a matter of believing and belonging – believing in the God who saves us but also as belonging to the people, God is saving” (Wainwright, 1997:94). Thus, giving a drive into involving in the life of ‘the other’ which could be in the form of material or non-material empowerment that results to transforming them. After all, in both the Scriptures and in classic Christian theology,

[s]alvation is the fulfillment of life in relationship with God and others which includes; rescue from the bondage of sin and evil, forgiveness and healing, renewal of life and reconciliation with God, with neighbours and enemies, one’s self and [even] the natural world (Migliore, 2004:319).



From the above observations, the salvation that defines God's loving and caring character includes "physical, this worldly here-and-now aspect which is not just penultimate to salvation but is part of what salvation means"(Nicolson, 1990:81). It helps us also, to understand salvation as that which "goes well beyond merely human deliverance but new heavens and new earth that are finally in view"( Davidson & Rae, 2011:86). Thus the need for further understanding salvation in its multifaceted or holistic nature and how it applies to human life in regards to different experiences abound and require further and intentional engagement. The following section presents an integrative view of salvation, Prosperity gospel, and human flourishing.

### **1.3 Salvation, Prosperity Gospel, and Human Flourishing**

In light of our point above, to discuss these multifaceted components of salvation, we need to note that "within Christian circles, there are rather widely differing conceptions of what salvation entails" (Erickson, 2013:826; 1985:888). One of these understandings of salvation is the one we hear and read about from prosperity preachers around the world. This teaching has now permeated many African contexts notable among others is the Nigerian Context with many preachers of the gospel of prosperity.<sup>7</sup> It sounds ambiguous if one compares their various teachings from the pulpit and books with the kind of lifestyle that they and many of their followers prescribe for their members to do. A life of serious consciousness of sin, evil and material indulgence, thus they live such separatist life most of the time away from much indulgence into pleasure, the expression of joy and material things.

Some scholars have observed that the presence of poverty in many African contexts could be one of the main reasons why the prosperity gospel has gained much acceptance within the continent of Africa. Thus, has resulted in the constant need for divine intervention in the situations of various concerns that mostly have to do with the financial provision, peace, and physical health challenges amongst others (cf. Togeraisei 2011:336; Golo 2013:369; Gifford 2007: 20-24; Mboya, 2016:16-42).

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<sup>7</sup> The following could serve as representative examples of the presence of prosperity preachers in Nigeria namely, the late Bishop Benson Idahosa as one of the prominent indigenous prosperity gospel preachers in Nigeria (cf. Young, 1996:1-5). W. F. Kumuyi, the founder of the Deeper Life Bible Church, is also known for his teaching on how to get "perfect health," "spiritual and material blessings, victory, promotion, peace, joy, and satisfaction" throughout life on earth (Kumuyi, 1990: 9 cf. Withrow 2007:15-41. The Prophet T. B. Joshua of the Synagogue Church for all Nations, is also known in Nigeria for his teaching and claims of salvation regarding divine health and power (cf. Phiri & Maxwell, 2007: 26).

In light of the above-mentioned challenging issues and especially for our most important subject of discussion namely, salvation theology, Ogbu Uke Kalu summarized what prosperity gospel believers and preachers hold as the meaning of salvation in the following words;

Prosperity theology emphasizes the God's promised generosity, as demonstrated with Abraham, is available for every believing Christian on earth today. As the covenant was a legal contract, so is the promise part of a spiritual contract. Each believer can access it, claim it, and possess it (2008:225).<sup>8</sup>

From the above example, we could observe how salvation is understood as manifested “in the transformation of material, physical, and psychic well-being” (Kalu 2008: 261). A view that expects the conversion of material and physical blessings into the psychological and even spiritual dimensions of life could easily lead to a misunderstanding the distinctive nature of what the blessings of salvation could be even though in a holistic manner. Much transformative (or even “magical”) expectations in the prosperity gospel circles make people to almost view “God little more than a celestial ATM, a means to an end instead of the end itself” (2008:256). Perspectives as in the above quote shall be critically examined and responded to as regarding the meaning and application of salvation, as this work progresses.

The underlying theory of prosperity gospel about salvation has more focus on the fact that “God rewards faithful Christians with good health, financial success and material wealth, ‘according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus’” (Gifford, 2005:202). From this perspective, people understand salvation as something that someone could get by merit from God. Thus many are motivated by their desires and needs for good health, spouse, children, jobs, promotion, and an increase in wealth which they see as salvation (Mbugua, *et al.* 2015:3). The belief and teaching which claims that “when a believer's life is devoid of sin and demonic presence, it is expected to be fruitful and prosperous” (2015:201 cf. Withrow 2007: 15) has created series of confusion within the Christian circles, perhaps within the circles of the prosperity gospel. Which leads to the conclusion that unfaithful Christians are the ones who suffer from ill- health, poverty, barrenness, misfortunes, and failure.

The above observations on prosperity gospel bring an understanding of salvation as equal to good health, increase in material wealth, and financial success which could be a myopic

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<sup>8</sup> Ogbu Uke Kalu was before his death, Henry Winters Luce Professor of World Christianity and Missions at McCormic Theological Seminary in Chicago.

understanding of what it means to be human particularly, on the meaning and application of human wholeness. For example, Jürgen Moltmann observes that “if health as a state of general well-being is declared to be the supreme value in human life in society, this implies a morbid attitude to health” (1993:273). However, this helps us to be cautious on emphasizing one or few aspects of life as the most important of all at the detriment of others instead of having a holistic view. Nevertheless, we cannot deny the fact that ‘being human is equated with being healthy’ (1993:273) thus illustrates well-being as wholeness, in that every sense of life is intact and is free to flourish.

Furthermore, one of the South African systematic theologians, Nadia Marais, who writes on the need for Human flourishing cautions that “when human flourishing becomes equated with health or well-being, it becomes highly suspect because it proclaims a utopia” (2015:310). She explains the utopia referred to in the preceding quote in agreement with Moltmann as “a life without suffering, happiness without pain, and a community without conflict” which actually “does not exist” (Moltmann, 1993:272). If the above conditions explain what health comprises thus, Moltmann declares, “to be a person in the fullest sense of the word is to be healthy... that is to be in a state where every impairment of the state of general well-being viewed as an impairment of the state of being human” (1993:272).

In his contributions on human flourishing from a theocentric perspective, David Kelsey (2008) explains how God’s ways about God’s people should be seen beyond human flourishing even though not excluding it. In agreement to the cautions of Moltmann, and Marais quoted above, he also objects the view of human flourishing with the notion of perfect health and the acquisition of great material wealth, which he noticed is becoming, unfortunately, prominent in Christian theology. Nevertheless, he does not deny the relation of human flourishing to God such that it is always dependent on God (2008:1). Thus, helps us to understand that human flourishing does not depend on human efforts as some could argue especially among prosperity gospel preachers (2008: 8, 9).

Kelsey outlines two kinds of human flourishing from a theocentric perspective which firstly includes the ‘type A’ that he says from God’s relation to humanity, and secondly, the ‘type B’ he says, is the human flourishing which depends on people’s appropriate responses to God. These reactions on both types A and B of human flourishing have to do with the realities of creation, sustenance, reconciliation and eschatological consummation (cf. 2008:20). These issues would further be investigated in conversation with Kelsey as this work progresses. Thus

the following section focuses especially on the appropriation of salvation in practical life experience from a therapeutic perspective toward human wholeness.

#### 1.4 Salvation as a Therapeutic Experience

The term “therapeutic” defined theologically by Jeremy Ayers, “refers to the working of God’s grace in the life of a Christian to restore the defaced ‘*imago Dei*.’ Which is unlike the current therapist, who seeks to restore a patient’s well-being using the proper psychological method” (Ayers, 2002:266). Such therapeutic experience of salvation refers to as the process of God’s restoration of the distorted aspect of the wholeness of the human life. Otherwise understood, especially among systematic theologians as the regeneration of life (cf. Walhout 1969:17-19; Sider, 1971:352-376; Leupold 1965:240-251).

Thus, the therapeutic approach to the understanding of salvation theology is beyond the conceptual and practical activities of medical practitioners on human physiology. From a traditional point of view, physicians are taken as “men (sic) who possess virtually magical powers of protection against the demons of sickness and death” (Guroian, 2004:310) otherwise, claim to have answers to almost every health condition. Such claims could perhaps, result in making “an idol of scientific medicine which is due to frequent breakthroughs in treatments of disease” (2004:310) for that sees salvation as a healing of physical ailments.

It is, however, crucial to specify what therapeutic understanding entails that which would help us with clarity from modern medicine’s perception. The quest for such clarification carries with it two possible significance summarized by Guroian thus; Firstly, the therapeutic vision of salvation can help us to recognize this idolatry and its dangers so that we gain an understanding of the actual relationship and the crucial difference between natural cure and spiritual rehabilitation. Secondly, it can assist us in ordering the goods of life appropriately and proportionately about a compassionate, forgiving, and healing divinity (2004:310), thus gives us an understanding of what comprises of therapeutic salvation. Furthermore, an in-depth clarification into this therapeutic experience follows below.

To that end, Ayers further declares that “*therapeia* could best understand as the process of God’s salvation becoming actualized in the human life by recovering the lost *imago Dei*” (2002:266). The *imago Dei* which directly translates into the image of God in the human person. Although this also could have some contested sense of understanding and explanation, yet, we could better understand it in a more distinct sense. That would mean the meaning of

being, which ultimately belongs to God and as well as to the human being. Which also, manifests itself in the physical, rational, relational, and spiritual aspects of life (cf. Von Dehsen 1997:259-270; Albright 2001:202-210; McDonald, 2008:303-327; Auld, 2005:259-262; Sexon 2010: 187-205; Bosman 2010:561-571). This therapeutic understanding of salvation in this thesis would probably help us to understand some practical aspects of the application of salvation in the multifaceted senses and to find some useful suggestions on how to appropriate the dialectical blessings of salvation in other African contexts in the presence of prosperity gospel.

### **1.5 Salvation as Healing in Conversation with Mercy Oduyoye as a Theologian in the Presence of Prosperity Gospel**

The ongoing study adopts to analyze Mercy Oduyoye as one of the dialogue partners with her perception of salvation in the presence of prosperity gospel in African contexts.<sup>9</sup> Mercy Amba Oduyoye(1933-date), a native of Ghana and married to Modupe Oduyoye of Western Nigeria, is being described as "a pioneer of African women's theology" (Brand, 2002:160) and "the mother of African theologies" (Phiri & Nadar, 2006: xvii,2,10). Her concern for the liberation of African women and their well-being in the context of African societies that are under-guarded by patriarchal ideologies, Oduyoye advanced the inauguration of 'the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians' in 1989. The circle, she observes "would motivate African theologians to pay more attention to what culture and religion do in women's lives" (2001c:99). These emphases have intensified her quest for African women's liberation.

The struggle of women to have a place in Africa has been an ongoing debate in that their status and many endeavors in what they do with their God-given abilities depends solely on whom they are married to, or whose mother they might be (Oduyoye, 1986a:122). Such characterizations seen from a broader perspective, have resulted to the assertion that "the Christian woman in the contemporary world is culturally and socially an endangered species" (Oduyoye & Kanyoro, 1992:54). Described as 'endangered species,' women undergo various life experiences with oppressions of different kinds. From a broader feminist perspective, these

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<sup>9</sup> Mercy Amba Oduyoye is a Ghanaian feminist theologian, who has written extensively on African women. She pioneered the formation of the Circle of Concerned African Women in 1989, a forum which creates and has given African women chance, to write about their experiences as women. Further on Oduyoye will be discussed in a chapter ahead of where her understanding of, and contributions to salvation theology in the African context especially is analyzed.

experiences include “exploitation, marginalization, powerlessness, cultural imperialism, and violence” (Jones, 2000:71). Even though the preceding examples are provided from an American feminist perspective yet, their reality amongst African women also applies. Thus, Oduyoye’s quest for the liberation of African women especially, from these life threats that they (women) might live fulfilled lives as God’s image bearers and in society, free of oppressive structures.

From her view of the place of salvation regarding the formulation and practice of theology, Oduyoye notes that “for theology to be relevant to African culture it has to speak of salvation” (1986a:246). Thus, the effective social structures that call for redemption in African contexts should do with “colonial domination, and patriarchal subjugation of African women” (Kennedy, 2010:289). These realities stimulate “the crying and the groaning” (2002:8) which characterize Oduyoye’s quest for salvation, especially of African women and children from dehumanizing experiences.

For Oduyoye, “life is an integrated whole and human beings ought to live recognizing and reflecting this integrity in their lives and their lives-in-community” (2001:33:). Within the African context, she articulates “it is the experience of liberation from colonialism and the cry for this liberation that has stimulated theologies that struggle to be relevant to the realities of Africa” (2002:4). These are theological discussions that relate to the freedom of being human considering the wholeness and flourishing of life. Thus, Oduyoye agrees that “it is the plan of God to make us truly human” (2002:23), which she also describes as “humanization” (2002:5).

Oduyoye’s perception of wholeness refers to “all that makes for the fullness of life and makes people celebrate life” (2001:34). This wholeness she argues “leads Africans to respect multicultural and inter-religious approaches to life in the community” (2001:34), which includes the respect of the ‘other’ in their otherness. This sense of recognition and respect for the other is what she expresses as an aspect of the health of African societies in that, “Africans consider human beings as enjoying the fullness of life when they have good health” (2001:34). She further notes that “God is concerned for the wholeness of our being and our relationship with God and other human beings” (2002:23). Thus, she emphasizes the notion of wholeness from an ecclesial perspective of peace in that “the Church must be guided by the concept of shalom and holistically address human problems. In other words, shalom cannot be achieved if health, wholeness, and well-being are lacking” (2002:40).

Oduyoye's articulation of salvation and its relation to the life of wholeness is considered further and in a detailed manner where a chapter is set aside to discussing her thoughts. Perhaps, her perception of salvation could be a great motivation for the ongoing study especially to what the introductory section tells of her theological explorations with specific emphasis on salvation. The possibility of attaining to the above claims, another African theologian is also considered to propel our investigation into a therapeutic understanding of salvation, hence, Jesse N. K. Mugambi in the next section.

## **1.6 Reconciliation as healing in conversation with Jesse N. K. Mugambi**

Alongside Oduyoye is another African theologian namely, Jesse N. K. Mugambi,<sup>10</sup> taken as the second dialogue partner. Mugambi (1947-) as any other African theologian is known for his tremendous work on the new theological paradigm – reconstruction- the term which gained prominence in African theological discourse in the early 1990s (Mwaura, 2008:1, Gathogo, 2009:2). The said new paradigm has since received acceptance such that it is described as “the fourth developmental stage in African theology” (Gathogo, 2009:3; cf. Kā Mana, 2002:90-91).

The development of this new paradigm seeks to explain the reality therein African theology which emerges as the continent that witnessed the end of cold war, colonialism, and apartheid (Mugambi, 1995: x; Maluleke, 2000:195). The liberation model Mugambi (1995:2; Gathogo, 2009:101) acknowledged, has been the dominant paradigm in African theology with Africans equated to be Israelites, a narrative he sees applicable to peoples who have suffered colonial and other forms of domination. Within such context with which Mugambi has affirmed as the emergence of the New World Order where events that were dehumanizing through colonial rule has ended (1997: iv; Gathogo, 2009:101), calls for a new paradigm. This paradigm he calls “reconstruction” (1995:5), a model which “seeks to correct the causes of previous suffering and conflict in the society” (Villa-Vicencio, 1992:41). Of course, a careful analysis of the past and present which focuses on making the best out of the future is “an essential ingredient of the theological task” (1992:41).

Reconstruction Mugambi (1995:12) asserts, is a term which belongs to engineering vocabulary or simply an “inter-disciplinary” (Villa-Vicencio, 1992:8). The idea of reconstruction has to do with modifications to ensure a different outlook on design – as in engineering- or the

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<sup>10</sup> Jesse N. K. Mugambi “a Kenyan theologian” (Mwaura, 2008:2; Gathogo, 2009:1).



reorganization of some aspects of society to make it more responsive to changed circumstance (Mugambi, 1995:12). From his point of view, Mugambi (1997:1) declares that “the theme of reconstruction covers quite a new concept in contemporary African thought,” seeing that it is an idea that has not been fully conceptualized by many Africans, perhaps theologians inclusive. The fact that this topic of reconstruction only gained prominence in the 1990s gave Mugambi the boldness to attest that “Christian theological reflection is essential for the healthy development of any church” (1995:1). He attested while throwing a challenge on African theologians that “a Church which is not capable of producing its theologians cannot be said to be mature” (1995:1).

The above outline comes from Mugambi’s assessment from where he found that “African Christian theology is in a methodological crisis, owing to the lack of methodological consciousness” (2003:1). One of such crisis could relate to the inability to understand the human quest for existence. There have been struggles for human survival, some of which are “struggle for socio-economic, political and cultural liberation and national construction” (Villa-Vicencio, 1992:24). The sole goal of such effort is always toward attaining a desirable goal for human existence which is “wholeness in all its possible dimensions” (1992:23).

The idea of reconstruction for Mugambi emphasizes a shift from what has happened in the past and to forge ahead for what is now and the possibility of better future particularly, in African theology. With what we have described so far, Mugambi’s concern with the emerging 21<sup>st</sup> century which for him “should be a century of reconstruction in Africa, building on old foundations which though strong, may have to be renovated” (1995:5). Thus, a detailed outlined of Mugambi’s theology of reconstruction has a central place as we shall see later in the study.

## **1.7 Research Problem**

From the above discussions and theological contributions, we could see that salvation is understood differently within the circle of classical Christian theology and prosperity gospel believers and preachers. This problem requires further investigation and dialogue between the two trends to see how the concept of salvation can be more meaningful and realistically appropriated in African contexts among others, that would have a lasting impact on the development and transformation of human life and the blessing of creation.



## **1.8 Research Question**

The research question that this thesis would address is as follows; How do Mugambi and Oduyoye portray salvation in the presence of prosperity gospels in African contexts?

## **1.9 Methodology**

The research methodology which this study takes relates to the analytical review of relevant literature already available in the field of inquiry. From this purview, the study conducts a critical analysis of Jesse Mugambi and Mercy Oduyoye's soteriologies; their interpretation of salvation and its application towards contributing to a broader understanding. The investigations began with Jesse Mugambi, simply because he carries what other African theologians hold which Oduyoye also does. Perhaps more than that, Oduyoye is studied after Mugambi because it would be interesting to conclude with the voice of the mother of African women's theologians. Thus, having the two voices together with their theological inquiries covering salvation, liberation, reconciliation, reconstruction, and health which are important aspects of our investigation. Such that understanding their perception could help us analyze critically, the meaning and applications of salvation theology in the presence of prosperity gospel in Africa.

## **1.10 Conclusion**

This chapter has laid the background to the following chapters that discuss the issues raised in this present introductory chapter more elaborately. Meanwhile, this chapter has provided the backdrop to the study regarding outlining the various trends that comprise the scope of the conversation which takes the focus of this thesis. It also introduces the research problem, research question, and the research methodology which are guiding routes towards the fruitful continuity and the possible completion of this project. Therefore, the following chapters shall take the conversations further into more detail study that would clarify as well as critically engage the concept of salvation in the holistic notions of liberation, reconciliation, healing, reconstruction and the wholeness of life.

Chapter 2 surveys and further explains prosperity gospels. Chapter 3 discusses salvation as liberation and reconstruction in conversation with Jesse Mugambi. Chapter 4 presents the soteriological analysis of Mercy Amba Oduyoye. Chapter 5 discusses salvation as wholeness. Chapter 6 provides the overall summary of the research as well as made some suggestive

contributions for further research on the subject matter. In such attempts, the chapter also made a case for the social concept of salvation and also presented prosperity gospel as human flourishing.

## Chapter 2: A Preliminary Overview of African Prosperity Gospels

### 2.1 Introduction

Discussions surrounding African prosperity gospels could be fascinating as well as an enormous task. Interesting because of the various proclamations by both the preachers, what they preach and their adherents, thus making it an attractive area of analysis. On the other hand, what makes studying prosperity gospels, an enormous task relates to the variation in practices and emphasis within the same circle themselves. A concern which could refer to the wideness of the African continent – seeing that it is not possible to talk of, or to discuss on ‘one Africa’ (Ford & Muers, 2005:486). Such emphasis holds on the ground that “Africa is vast, complex, and differentiated -such that- we should never pretend to speak representatively and comprehensively about all of Africa” (2005:286). Additionally, the vastness of the Africa as we will be seen having connections with various categories of prosperity gospels as we shall discuss later in this section.

To that end, however, a good grasp of prosperity gospels, their teaching, their propagators, and their roots, would require us situating it within a better frame of proper reference. Hence, a better understanding of what it entails would involve a survey of its roots from where this branch of teaching started as it would be of enormous importance to understanding these gospels of prosperity. Before then, it is crucial to have an understanding that prosperity gospels belong to a branch of Christendom called Pentecostalism (Lee, 2007:235).

### 2.2 Pentecostalism

The word ‘Pentecost’ Vondey (2016:5) “arguably represents the foundation symbol for ‘Pentecostal theology.’” It could also have a link with early disciples’ experience in the book of Acts chapters 1 and 2<sup>11</sup>, which marked the fulfillment of Jesus’ promise of the Holy Spirit after the ascension into heaven (Yong, 2013:241; 2014:136). This concept of Pentecost

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<sup>11</sup> The name Pentecostal says Owioye (2012:97; Yong, 2007:17) is derived from the account of the day of Pentecost as described in chapters 1 and 2 of the Acts of Apostles, when the Holy Spirit descended upon the first Christians: "And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance". Vondey (2016:5) added that the day of Pentecost is significant for Pentecostal theological reflection first and foremost on the experiences and practices recorded in the narratives in the books of Luke-Acts. Additionally, Yong puts it that "ironically, Pentecostalism as a religious movement was birthed during the period when science contributed to the parting of ways between what we now call fundamentalism and modernism" (2011:2).

experience has over the years, turned into a movement within the Christendom who's several activities regarding their practices differ from the mainline Protestants, Roman Catholics, and others. Thus, Pentecostalism as a concept is said to be a "revival and renewal movement" (Yong, 2007:16).

Some of the experiences on the day of Pentecost which include the manifestation of the Spirit's outpouring on all flesh has emerged to be a prominent norm in the Pentecostal movement, taken to have different perspectives in the Pentecostal theology (Yong, 2014:136).<sup>12</sup> The belief that "strange tongues can indeed be vehicles of the gospel and can declare the wonders of God" (2014:136) abound within their theological thinking and imagination. Moreso, just as the manifestation of tongues that guaranteed all the nations, and peoples that were present at Pentecost to hear what was said, so also is Pentecostalism becoming a global movement involving individuals and people groups from every continent (2014:138). Hence, the fact claimed on the outpouring of the Spirit on all flesh "preserves, validates and even in this sense redeems the many tongues, languages, and cultures of the world" (2014:137). Which historically has been and is a movement whose efforts are both "harmonizing the various tongues confused at Babel on the one hand and as anticipating the redemption of all languages for the sake of the gospel on the other" (2014:137).

One of the unique views between Pentecostal movement with other bodies in the Christendom relates to their emphasis since inception. For instance, the fact that "early Pentecostals stood their feet firmly planted in the material world" (Bowler, 2010:41). However, as the movement progresses, they became better known for their heavenly minded experiences (2010:41) which resulted to the characterization of their actions. However, as the movement progresses, it later adopted the heavenly minded focus through their "experiences of ecstatic worship, speaking in tongues, and concentration on the Lord's imminent returned" (Bowler, 2010:41). Asamoah-Gyadu further lays some differences the movement has recorded which brings about its distinctiveness which will further be our focus below.

However, in more specific terms, the roots of Pentecostalism could be traced back to the "so-called Azusa Street revival, which is considered to mark the birth of Pentecostalism in Los

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<sup>12</sup> Yong (2014) declares further that, there is a kind of agreement within the Pentecostal circle on the expression of the Spirit in the narrative. He says whereas sons and daughters were said to prophesy in the first century, so also men and women were co-laborers in the 'harvest field' of Azusa Street and the Pentecostal revival in the twentieth century and beyond.

Angeles, the United States in 1906” (Lindhardt, 2015:3; Gee, 2008; Yong, 2008).<sup>13</sup> This movement is said to have “centered in a black holiness church in downtown Los Angeles” (Gee, 2008:292). Thus, tracing the origin of Pentecostal movement is attached to the early teachings of the followers. Ehioghae & Olanrewaju (2015:70) observe that “the background of Pentecostalism concerns with the holiness movement and the Wesleyan doctrines of sanctification in 1906.” This movement (Cox, 2001:22) received a characterization as one formed by African- American preachers with no theological formation. Of which Cox goes on to describe them as “domestic servants, custodians and day workers who were both blacks and whites” (2001:22; Yong, 2011:4).

Consequently, from the above description of the experiences they had, we could equate same with the early disciples on the day of Pentecost with their peculiar experience too. Gathering from the claims of the pioneers of Pentecostalism and the zeal they had on enhancing holiness living, gives us an eye opener to what this movement had as its focus from the beginning. As such, with African prosperity gospel being the context of this study, it is of utmost importance to trace the developmental movement of Pentecostalism to Africa.

### **2.2.1 Pentecostalism in Africa**

Following the inception of Pentecostalism in Africa as having its roots from North America, the first propagators of this movement had a global plan of extending the flow to other parts of the world with Africa inclusive. At the arrival of this movement in Africa and how it has gained much ground, it has since earned a reputation as "representing the fastest sector of Christianity" (Ehioghae & Olanrewaju, 2015:70). It is not only the fastest growing segment of African Christianity but more so that “the movement enhances the growth of Christianity in Africa” (Gifford, 2007:20). Thus Gifford summarizes that churches are growing most spectacularly are the ones that are Pentecostal or neo-Pentecostal or Pentecostal – like (2007:20).

Further, an investigation into what fuels the rapid expansion of Pentecostalism that has enhanced the spread of Christianity in Africa demands deeper emphasis. To this end,

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<sup>13</sup> Yong (2007:16), in the United States, the Azusa Street revival in 1906 precipitated a century of revival: the birth of the modern Pentecostal fellowships (denominations) the Latter Rain Movement, the Charismatic streams in the mainline Protestant, Catholic, and Orthodox churches.

Ayegboyin (2006:68) describes what would be described here as classical<sup>14</sup> Pentecostalism as the group that has holiness and righteousness as its hallmark. This group he goes further citing few examples<sup>15</sup> describes their sole focus to include, emphasis on baptism in the Holy Spirit, the holiness of life, ethics leading to perfection and the mandate to the mission (2006:69). The second group beside the classical Pentecostals are those he says emphasize faith movement for healing and prosperity. This group relates to the neo-Pentecostals<sup>16</sup> In Gifford's classification above, it is, however, from this group of Pentecostals that the propagators preach and teach prosperity, a concept to be studied in detail below.

Ehioghae & Olanrewaju (2015:70) observe that the growth of Pentecostalism in Africa has a connection with the American capitalist mentality as it found fertile ground in the boom years of the 1960s and 1970s. For at that time, success through a positive mental attitude was the rule, and Pentecostalism became increasingly tied to growth-oriented American commercialization (2015: 70,71). On the other hand, Gifford in his discussion of the rise of Pentecostalism in Africa in the 1980s declares that by the 1990s Pentecostalism had become what he describes as undoubtedly the salient sector of African Christianity concerning rapid expansion. Consequently, the statistics on the enlargement of this movement in Africa was estimated in the year 2000 by Kalu thus,

Statistically, the estimates are that in the year 2000, about 20 percent of the population in Zimbabwe, Tanzania, and Malawi were Pentecostal; 14 percent in Kenya; 11 percent in Nigeria; 10 percent in Ghana and Zambia; 8 percent in Democratic Republic of the Congo and South Africa; and finally, 4 percent in Uganda (2008:5).

In another survey done by the World Christian Database, “Pentecostals now make up 12 percent (or about 107 million) of Africa’s entire population” (Lindhardt, 2015:1).

The above statistical estimate has had some level of affirmation, such that it is applicable in how “Pentecostalism has moved from an initial periphery position to become a force to be reckoned with within African Christianity and sub-Saharan African societies in general”

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<sup>14</sup> By classical Pentecostalism here, we mean the early version of this movement whose emphasis was on holiness of their adherents, thus differ from what would be neo-Pentecostals in due course of this study.

<sup>15</sup> Some of the few examples of the Pentecostal movement Ayebgoyim (2006:69) says include amongst many others are; the Deeper Life Bible Church, The Holiness Evangelical Mission, and Holiness Bible Church, to mention but a few.

<sup>16</sup> The concept Neo- Pentecostals conveys the idea of ‘New Churches within the sphere of Pentecostalism whose sole focus is health, wealth, and prosperity. An elaborate explanation follows in the next section.

(Lindhardt, 2015:1). As a result of this shift from the peripheral state, Pentecostalism movement has engaged in using other strategies through which they experience more chances of expansion. Some of these strategies are the placement of these churches that are Pentecostal, various activities which include their teachings, and other events and activities which attract the attention of many such as the youths (Bowler & Reagan, 2014:187). Thus contributing immensely to the penetration and quick expansion of this movement in many African communities and cities (Ehioghae & Olanrewaju, 2015:70).

The affirmation to these strategies of Pentecostalism which enhances their rapid expansion with the skills they use forms the discussion below. Ehioghae & Olanrewaju observe that "what seems to be no longer in doubt is that, Pentecostalism has penetrated into the heart of major cities and communities on the African continent, providing new identities and a paradigm shift for African Christianity in line with a charismatic aesthetic" (Ehioghae & Olanrewaju, 2015:70). Besides this affirmation, Anderson argues, "Over the past few years, the greatest quantitative growth of Pentecostalism has been in Sub-Saharan Africa, which has been so phenomenal that researchers are asking whether the entire continent is turning Pentecostal" (1992:21).

Perhaps, a working definition of the concept - Pentecostalism could be of added advantage to the ongoing discussion. Such that, the discussion so far has concentrated the various ways which have enhanced its expansion. A working definition of Pentecostalism would go a long way to giving a vivid characterization of the movement. Asamoah-Gyadu<sup>17</sup> Observes that "discussion of Pentecostalism in African Christianity must first be within the context of what is meant by Pentecostals" (2005:10). While situating Pentecostalism within its origin, Asamoah-Gyadu further expresses the historical link of the movement about the Azusa Street movement of 1901 and 1906.

To the African Pentecostalism, he sees it be understood better when placed within a context as well, which in his view would bring a better understanding of the movement in Africa, especially. In defining this concept, Asamoah-Gyadu suggests its perception from an intercultural perspective (2005:11). Which he notes, would see the different contexts of

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<sup>17</sup> Jacob Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu is Baeta-Grau professor of African Christianity and Pentecostal theology at the Trinity Theological Seminary, Lagon, Accra, Ghana. He is the author of contemporary African Christianity: Interpretations from an African context (Oxford: Regnum International, 2013), amongst other publications.

Pentecostalism as notable members of a global family. With such an insight, he proposes the following definition of what he understands as Pentecostalism thus:

Pentecostalism refers to Christian groups which emphasize salvation in Christ as a transformative experience wrought by the Holy Spirit. Moreover, in which atmospheric phenomena including ‘speaking in tongues,’ prophesies, visions, healing, and miracles in general, perceived as standing in holistic continuity. With the experiences of the early church as found especially in the Acts of Apostles, are sought, accepted, valued, and consciously encouraged among members as signifying the presence of God and experiences of his spirit (2005:12).

The above definition of Pentecostalism makes it accessible to spot out certain features that have characterized the movement. Features such as speaking in tongues, healing, miracles to mention but a few, have so much been pointers to identifying Pentecostalism (Gifford, 2007:20; Yong, 2014:180; Clifton, 2014:205; Golo, 2013:368). However, these features are readily associated with the classical Pentecostalism, because they were their point of reference at the origin of the movement.

Consequently, seeing what characterizes classical Pentecostalism – a group described concerning Holiness above, our interest here goes to another group within Pentecostalism namely, prosperity gospel, as more emphasis on prosperity gospel forms the focus. Apparently, it indicates that they form a category which stresses that “right standing with God earned through salvation must yield or trigger the blessings of good health, prosperity, and wealth” (Golo, 2013:368). To that end, the section below will guide us through the various classes of the Pentecostal movement, which forms a ‘heartbeat’ of this part of the study for more clarity.

### **2.2.2 Forms of African Pentecostalism**

As noted earlier on the task therein analyzing an African Pentecostalism, it is because of the “impossibility to give a general history of Pentecostalism in Africa, as every African country has a unique history” (Lindhardt, 2015:67). On a similar note concerning the differences that exist within the circle of the Pentecostal movement, it could be suggested to have led to its different types because of an affirmation that “different kinds of African Pentecostalism are proportionately stronger in some countries than in others” (Lindhardt, 2015:67). Some of the reasons for such differences within one single branch of Christendom in Africa would relate to the different experiences each part of Africa has undergone. Hence, some of these differences align to reasons including in a summary that “part of the different histories has to do with the various kinds of colonial experience, differing religious backgrounds, and more or less



developed mission histories” (Lindhardt, 2015:67). Thus, some of such differences have resulted in many disparities within the operations of African Pentecostalism, as such the need to categorize them into various types.

Lindhardt describes four different types of Pentecostalism in Africa, analyzing each based on their motivation.<sup>18</sup> First are those he calls ‘African Independent Spirit churches.’<sup>19</sup> They include churches that started in the early twentieth century, he says, and were established by African leaders, implying that these churches began before the coming of the North American Pentecostal missionaries. Some of these churches began with much zeal as a reaction to what they perceived as cold formalism in the missionary churches. The practices of these independent churches include among others “the practice of healing, prayer, and spiritual gifts...Which makes their reference by different terms in different regions” (2015:69; Turner, 1979:97). As to their location, Lindhardt adds, “they tend to be regional in distribution and only extend beyond their regions when significant migration from them has occurred” (2015:68).

The second group of Pentecostalism he calls ‘Classical Pentecostals.’<sup>20</sup> This group he says are denominations originating in the early twentieth-century revival and missionary movements in the Western world. This group of Pentecostals he says, “have a theology of an empowering experience of spirit baptism usually accompanied by speaking in tongues” (2015:68). Other important aspects of emphasis in this group of Pentecostalism include “faith healing, prophecy,

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<sup>18</sup> Martin Lindhardt (2015) is an associate professor of cultural sociology at the University of Southern Denmark. He received his Ph.D in social anthropology from the University of Aarhus, Denmark, in 2004. His research and writing mainly focus in Pentecostalism in Chile and on Pentecostal/charismatic and witchcraft in Tanzania. He is the author of "Power on Powerlessness. A study of Pentecostal Life-worlds in Urban Chile" and editor of "practicing the faith. The Ritual Life of Pentecostal-charismatic Christians." He is also the editor of "Pentecostalism in Africa: Presence and impact of Pneumatic Christianity in Postcolonial Societies."

<sup>19</sup> In Southern Africa, there are Zionists and Apostolic, "Zion-type" and "Spirit-type" churches; in Central Africa, they include Kimbanguists and various prophet-led movements: in West Africa "spiritual", "prophet-healing" and "Aladura" (prayer) churches: and in East Africa "Pentecostal" and "spiritual" churches. Lindhardt continues that, most of these churches prefer to be known as "churches of the Spirit." With their practices, he notes further that some within the Pentecostal circle feel this group should be separated from others due to their relative enormity of African phenomenon. (2015:68)

<sup>20</sup> Lindhardt (2015: 68) further describes this group of Pentecostalism in a broader sense as those originating in the early twentieth-century revival and missionary movements in the western world. Theologically he says, they have been divided into sub-groups as follows; a) Holiness Pentecostals, with roots in the nineteenth century holiness movement with a belief in a second work of grace called sanctification; b) Baptist or 'Finished work' Pentecostals, those he says, differ in their approach to sanctification, seeing it as an outgrowth from conversion; c) Oneness Pentecostals, these he says, reject the doctrine of the Trinity and posit a Unitarianism in the deity of Christ; d) Apostolic Pentecostals, these he says to emphasize the authority of present-day 'apostles' and 'prophets.' These he notes further, applies mostly to western-originating Pentecostal denominations in Africa.

exorcism, speaking in tongues, spontaneous prayer, exuberant liturgical expression, stress on dreams and visions” (Ukah, 2007:9-10).

The third type of Pentecostalism he calls them ‘Older church charismatics,’ which include Catholic charismatics, Anglican charismatics, and Protestant charismatics<sup>21</sup> (2015:68). He makes a further distinction on their focus that they are characterized “by their approach to the subject of Spirit baptism and spiritual gifts from a sacramental perspective” (2015:68). One further unique feature of this group is the fact that they are beyond the scope of Pentecostal groups and in different parts of Africa such that “Charismatic renewal movements found in the older churches that are bigger and more widespread than anywhere in Europe or North America” (2015:69).

The fourth type of Pentecostalism Lindhardt describes as the ones whose teaching this study looks to do the most intensive investigation, are those he calls ‘Neo-Pentecostal’ and neo-charismatic churches<sup>22</sup>. This group he says “are probably the largest of the new churches in Africa and are often regarded as ‘charismatic independent churches’” (2015:69). Perhaps, this group as the previous one mentioned above also has a unique feature having to do with metamorphosing in their name.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Ukah, (2007:10) says about this type of Pentecostalism that, they were established by Africans between the 1920s and 1960s without any relationship with Mission Pentecostal churches. Though this form of Pentecostalism, says Ukah, did not achieve great social visibility, yet, they were significant in appropriating the Christian message in a distinctive way that attempted to provide locally meaningful answers to local questions and problems based primarily according to the perspective of the Bible as they understood it. Also, their isolation from having any contact with foreign Pentecostal missionaries was that they had been part of already existing churches. Lindhardt (2015:69) adds that, in some countries like Nigeria, Ghana, and Ethiopia, they (referring to charismatic movement) constitute a significant percentage of the Christian population. That one can go to different African countries and discover charismatic renewal movements in the older churches that are bigger and more widespread than anywhere in Europe or North America.

<sup>22</sup> This group of churches that make up this type of Pentecostalism, are described in what they claim as follows. Ukah, (2007:11) says of them that, they constitute a unique people of God who is saved and the rest of humanity is doom to perdition". He notes. Further, they do this through some of their teachings including promising their members comprehensive solutions to their impending problems on condition that they become born again and give generously to their leaders as a form of exchange for material and spiritual blessings including healing, wealth, abundant life, success and earthly promotion. In respect to their areas of emphasis, he says, they are known with these names amongst others; prosperity Christianity, health and wealth gospel, the faith movement, name-it-claim-it, to mention but a few. In addition, Lindhardt (2015:69) says about this type of Pentecostalism that, they include mega churches in African cities, and consisting of ‘word of faith’ and similar churches, where the emphasis is on physical health and material prosperity by faith, such as the Rhema Ministries in South Africa of Ray McCauley and the "Winners Chapel" churches in Nigeria and elsewhere, founded by David Oyedepo. These prosperity churches he affirms, "are very prominent in most parts of Africa" (2015:69).

<sup>23</sup> Lindhardt 2015:69 notes, Neo-Pentecostal is a fluid term that has been used in various ways over the past fifty years, at one stage referring to older church Charismatics, later to independent charismatic churches, so-called ‘Third Wave’ churches in North America, and more recently to a wide range of newer independent Pentecostal churches that embrace contemporary methods of communication, media and marketing, form international

Similarly, Asamoah-Gyadu summarizes primarily, the theological setting of the types mentioned above of Pentecostalism. First, he says the eschatological theology of the classical Pentecostalism. This theology he opines “is the eschatological realization of the kingdom of God for which the believer must always prepare morally and spiritually to qualify to partake in its blessings” (2011:293). Secondly, Asamoah-Gyadu examines the Pentecostal- liberation theology of the charismatic churches otherwise called ministries. The main nub of this theology relates to “the core argument of this gospel that God has met all the needs of believers, and that this can be appropriated through positive confession of faith and application of right spiritual formulas” (2011:293; cf. Gifford, 1998). The third theological frame of Pentecostalism in Africa is what Asamoah-Gyadu refers to as “peripheral Pentecostalism” (2011:293). It is from this frame of Pentecostalism comes the propagators of prosperity gospels, whose emphasis is on the ‘here and now.’ They focus mostly on preaching the reality of attaining what includes perfect health, provided that an individual has enough faith to claim whatever they desire such as, health, success, wealth, promotions, as much as their faith depends on, they are promised these among other things.

### **2.2.3 Pentecostal theology and salvation**

Ma (2012:140) addresses how the trend of ‘Pentecostalism’ gained popularity during the first half of the twentieth century, and since then, various features of their teaching have emerged. In most Pentecostal-Charismatic Programs Ma stresses, “the most popular topic is healing and material blessing...which then brought about the birth of ‘prosperity gospel’ (2011:140). The said prosperity gospel being a dimension within the Pentecostal movement has its details stipulated in the course of this study encompasses the focus mentioned above. However, before delving into analyzing prosperity gospel, it is important that we present background on understanding salvation in a more deeper sense.

Pentecostalism has often referred to as “a tongue-speaking movement” (Ma, 2011:140). The idea of which relates to what enhances its spread, namely, its distinctiveness from the religious practices of non-Pentecostal movements. Perhaps, it is wise to say, the growth of Pentecostalism in Africa links to “the spiritual experiences of the early recipients of these

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networks or ‘ministries’ and often have a ‘prosperity’ emphasis. These neo-Pentecostals Asamoah-Gyadu attests that “they are Christian communions that love the Old Testament, particularly the stories of the Patriarchs” (2012:70).

manifestations of the spirit” (Lindhardt, 2015:61), one of such experiences being speaking in tongues amongst others. This realization of what describes here as ‘unique experience’ contributes to some of the claims the adherents of the movement make. As such, Lindhardt notes that “real Christians were the born again ones, whereas, the vast majority whether they attended church or not was simply not Christians” (2015:61).

Considering their emphasis on the experience which manifests through what they would speak well of what their teaching or rather, what comprises their theology. Gifford (2007) observes what is so unique in the circle of Pentecostalism about their theology, which might also contribute to their claims of superiority in spiritual manifestations that they call those outside their camps as non-Christians. He says, “the growing Pentecostal churches have one thing in common – a focus on achieving success” (2007:20). Elaborating further he notes that “discussing African Pentecostalism without its emphasis on success is like talking computers without mentioning software” (2007:20).

On a further note, Yong (2011:180) makes a remarkable claim concerning the focus of Pentecostal theology and its relevance. He describes it as “both embodied and constituted by the many tongues, languages, and cultures caught up across the field of the Spirit’s outpouring, vigorous Pentecostal theology.” With such descriptions, Yong makes a distinction between what theology is Pentecostal or should be seen and accepted as one saying “any theology that does not finally have performative implications cannot be said to be authentically Pentecostal” (2011:180). This experiential faith, Ma (2011:143) puts it as that which encompasses both spiritual and physical dimensions of Christian life. Such claims are with emphasis on the significance therein social and physical concerns of humanity. Thus, Yong concludes that “Pentecostal theology will be only as good as it engages with scriptural horizons amid the complexities of the present world” (2011:180). Such complications could include the human quest for salvation in various dimensions to foster human flourishing.

As regarding salvation, Vondey (2016:5) observes, “the unprecedented events of this Pentecost forms an archetype of practices and convictions for Pentecostal soteriology, reshaped and multiplied today by the vast diversity of global Pentecostal expressions and lived experiences on the ground.” Moreover, as Anso (2014:324) asserts, “salvation is essential for all Christians.” Of course, which the Pentecostals hold as well that “the chief motivation for Pentecostal soteriology is the potential that the objective historical reality of Christ’s death becomes an objective” (Vondey, 2016:11). It also calls for acknowledging the fact that, for

Pentecostals, “the focus of Pentecostal soteriology is not on salvation but the Savior, not in the act itself but on the actor: Jesus” (2014:19).

Accordingly, this introductory survey into the theology and salvation of Pentecostalism could lead us to a broader understanding of what the sole focus of the current study upholds namely, prosperity gospel and salvation. The reason being that, the study has not promised to make an exhaustive study on Pentecostalism as a whole, but a survey of African prosperity gospel. To this end, it would serve this study well to give an overview of the development of prosperity gospel in general and its emergence in the African continent. That will be done with a particular emphasis on the salvation in the theology of prosperity gospel seeing as that forms a major concern in the ongoing study

### **2.3 Prosperity Gospel/Theology<sup>24</sup>**

This particular section gears toward surveying the development of prosperity gospel theology from its probable inception until arrival in Africa. What comprises the teachings of this class of Pentecostalism will be studied, thus would give us an understanding of possibly what differentiates it from other forms already mentioned above. Most importantly, their focus on salvation which this study tries to analyze alongside two prominent theologians namely, Oduyoye and Mugambi, whose portrayals of salvation is crucial to surveying salvation in holistic terms.

Prosperity gospel/theology has since its inception and arrival in Africa given many connotations which are useful pointers to its teaching. At its inception, prosperity gospel has been a “strand of Pentecostalism right from its source in America” (Kitaase & Achunike, 2015:21). Such connotations have resulted to why it has turned into “a global phenomenon, and as one of these fastest growing religious movements in the world today” (Mboya, 2016:18; Liroy, 2007:42; Ehioghae & Olanrewaju, 2015:70). It is also “the fastest visible phenomenon on the contemporary religious mega-screen” (Peters, 2009:137) thus, having a description with emphasis as “a Christian theology whose significance is that, God wants believers to be rich and enjoy physical health” (Mumford, 2012:371).

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<sup>24</sup> Some researchers have adopted the phrase "prosperity gospels" while others agree to use 'prosperity theology.' As such, within the context of this study, former will be used primarily with the likelihood of using the later at some points.

Kitaue & Achunike observe that the prosperity gospel is said to be a traditional theology of modern living (2015:22). However, as a traditional belief, certain factors might have resulted in its popularity, seeing that before its inception and arrival in Africa, other forms of religious teaching have been in existence, and still exist. To clarify this, Kitaue & Achunike (2015:22) further affirm what they see as a cluster of four themes, namely, faith, health, wealth, and victory as the running themes in the prosperity gospel messages. They continue that, faith from which a spiritual power released through positive words and believe, is measured by the wealth and health which allows believers to aspire complete victory on earth. Better put, the amount of faith therein one, influenced to a larger extent the health and wealth of such individuals. These four themes mentioned above have been focal points within the teaching of prosperity gospel circle as the definition below will reveal.

By way of defining prosperity gospel, an African chapter of the Lausanne Theology working group presents what they articulate to give the meaning of this movement. It is defined as “the teaching that believers have a right to the blessing of health and wealth and that they obtain these blessings through positive confessions of faith and the ‘sowing of seeds’ through the faithful payments of tithes and offering” (2012:99; cf. Gbote & Kgatla, 2014). Defined clearly, prosperity gospel

Is claiming freedom from sickness, poverty, and all suffering by Christ’s death on the cross. Promising material physical, and visible blessings for all who would embrace it. They insist that God’s will be for all his children to prosper here and now (Mbugua *et al.*, 2005:3).

These definitions portray what core in the teachings of prosperity gospel which will be elaborated later in the study.

The above definitions of prosperity gospel have enabled an understanding which creates a quest for knowing what characterizes these preachers as custodians of the movement. As noted in the above definitions, it is glaring seeing how they emphasize what they preach. To this end, Ayegboyin (2006) says, “they have written several books, tracts, and handbills and made hundreds of audio and video cassette tapes, all giving scriptural principles for prosperity, health, and happiness” (2006:73). The use of these mentioned mediums is all to “making the gospel suit them and psychologically ‘coerce’ their adherents to give generously to reap a bountiful harvest” (2006:73).

However, in a more particular sense, prosperity gospel preachers “are those pastors and their churches which teach that God has met all the needs of human beings in the suffering and death of Christ. Moreover, that every Christian should now share the victory of Christ over sin, sickness, and poverty” (Golo, 2013:368). These preachers frequently emphasize confidence that “God’s blessings of material prosperity and abundance unto those Christians who faithfully depend on God, by their salvation wrought through Christ” (2013:368).

Lioy asserts that, while the theology of the prosperity gospel is not monolithic (Lioy, 2007:42), its teachings follow a general pattern (Folarin, 2007:88). This pattern has to do with what the adherents lay emphasis namely, a faith which they take as a “supernatural force that believers use to get whatever form of personal success they want, including physical health and material prosperity” (Lioy, 2007:42). Such emphasis on faith is taken to be a “medium through which the full power of the Holy Spirit is unleashed” (2007:42). That could come to fruition in what they term as “the theology of the spoken word (Rheumatology)” (Elioghae & Olanruwaju, 2015:71; Lioy, 2007:42). Perhaps, there is a sort of realizable power in this ‘power of the spoken word’ such that it becomes possible that “what believers think and say to become actualized” (Lioy, 2007:42).

The above premise comes from what we have mentioned earlier as the most famous within the circles of the prosperity gospel, namely, ‘health and material blessing’ (Mbugua *et al.* 2015:3). For “it was the strong emphasis on healing and material prosperity that led to the birth of the ‘health and wealth’ theology, ‘prosperity gospel,’ faith movement’ and kingdom now’ theology” (Ma, 2011:144; Schiemann & Jung, 2012:739). These forms of theology with particular reference to ‘health and wealth’ with their early propagators are perhaps, discussed below.

The emphasis on health and wealth as the pillars in the prosperity gospel theology is seen within the lenses of social needs of humanity and to an extent, the social ministry of Jesus in the Gospel narratives. With that in mind, Ma explains that “Christianity cannot just be restricted to religious matters such as sin, forgiveness, eternal life *-though as necessary as they are* (emphasis mine) while physical and material concerns are assigned to different mission programs” (2011:147). To emphasize the above claim, he concludes that “it is when life can survive physically, will the soul have a chance to learn about spiritual matters” (2011:147). It is because to him when the above-mentioned is into consideration that “the primacy of physical material dimensions of life is more pronounced than the spiritual aspects of Christian mission”



(2011:147). Hence, the quest for promoting social concerns which have to do with daily living, and are relevant to human existence, namely; health and wealth as we shall soon see.

Further on this quest, and going through the early propagators of this teaching of prosperity, it will serve us well to situate their practice that is evident through their teaching. Such inquiry will not only have us base our focus from where the whole movement began but also, where the movement is in practice – Africa in particular which forms the context of this study. Thus, the brief background of prosperity gospel becomes our next concern.

### **2.3.1 Prosperity Gospel: A North American movement?**

The prosperity gospel theology that is widespread in the African continent is said to have originated from North America (Golo, 2013:369; Young, 1996:3; Folarin, 2007:70; Phiri & Maxwell, 2007:24; Togarasei, 2011:339). As a movement, certain individuals have been described as the pioneers with their various focuses all gearing toward presenting the gospel of prosperity. First of which is Essek W. Kenyon<sup>25</sup> Described as “the source of prosperity theology” (Jackson, 1989:16), then Kenneth E. Hagin (SNR)<sup>26</sup> described as "the father of the faith movement" (Mumford, 2012:372; Jackson, 1989:16).

With a lineage from North America (Smith, 1992:18; Schiemann & Jung, 2012:739) gives a description that characterizes the moment from its inception as well as the context and focus of this drive. He says, referring to the prosperity gospel, “it arose as a religious concomitant to the charismatic renewal of the 1960s, whereas its underlying philosophy stemmed out of North American socioeconomic (dream) cultures.” This assertion with socio-economic cultures would later be one of the focal points of the movement, as many of the contemporary promoters emphasize wealth and other matters that concern the social well-being of an individual. Some

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<sup>25</sup> An Evangelist, Pastor, and Teacher, was born in Hadley Hills, New York, on April 24, 1867, at a lumber camp (Mumford, 2012:372). Kenyon spent much of his life pastoring churches, says Mumford, and in 1898 he founded the Bethel Bible Institute where he trained students on what would later become his focus in ministry, namely, healing and other aspects that characterized his vision. Mumford further says about Kenyon that at the age of sixty-four, Kenyon launched ‘Kenyon's Church of the Air,’ a radio ministry and founded the Seattle Bible Institute in 1935. From these achievements, Kenyon was exposed to writings that provided a theological foundation for the Word of Faith movement.

<sup>26</sup>As the father of the faith movement, he was born on August 20, 1917, in McKinney, Texas. He was a sickly child who was bedridden with a deformed heart during most of his childhood, opines Mumford, (2012:372), thus was not expected to live very long. Mumford says further about the motivation for Hagin's ministry that "after reading Mark 5:34 wherein Jesus healed the woman with the issue of blood, he was healed completely" (2012:372). This was probably his turning point which he began teaching on divine healing.



of these related social concepts that have turned to become very central in prosperity gospel include success, promotions, health- of course, physical health, and many others.

Further, the prosperity gospel under study has two wings through which their teachings falls namely; one emphasizes healing while the other two focused on material success or wealth (Lioy, 2007:42; Lee, 2007:228; Ngong, 2009:1). Hence, to connect these two from the North America context, we say, prosperity gospels “forms were packaged and marketed chiefly by healing evangelists while its apparent success in physical healing was extended to the material realm quite naturally and automatically” (Peters, 2009:137; Smith, 1992:18).

As a form of by neo-Pentecostalism, prosperity gospel has some connections with other branches of the Christendom about its roots. Hence, that prosperity gospel has roots in “evangelical Pentecostalism and Pentecostal denominations in the United States” (Schieman & Jung, 2012:739; Browner, Gifford, & Rose, 1996; Coleman 2000; Cox, 1994; Hunt, 2000). It is to such claims that prosperity gospel is ascribed to be “a Protestant by-product” (Peters, 2009:138), which illustrates that “the Protestant movement occurred not at any precise point in time, but rather within the larger modernist milieu of the European history thought” (2009:138). This milieu Peter characterizes by the domino effect of such rapidly rising movements as the modern philosophy.<sup>27</sup> Of course, such claims are estimated to have evolved over around the twentieth century, where Pentecostal theology came to perception as an Evangelical theology” (Kärkkäinen, 2002: xiv; Yong, 2014:35), though with recent questions on such union.<sup>28</sup>

Further, with the connection therein Protestant movement and prosperity gospel above, it is evident that the two might have some influence on each other. Yes, the former which happens to have later as its product could be of some greater contributions to the development of inputs growth of the later as will be illustrated below. Some of the contributions which Protestantism might have had that to enhanced the growth of prosperity gospel could be summarized as follows; the primacy of faith, the privatization of faith, and the sole sufficiency of Scriptures

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<sup>27</sup> Some of these modern philosophers include, Rene Descartes (1596-1650), the modern theology of F.D.E. Schleiermacher (1768-1834), the geocentric cosmology of Galileo and the inductive method of Sir, Francis Bacon (Peters, 2009).

<sup>28</sup> Kärkkäinen, (2002: xiv) alludes about the questioning of the validity of an argument that Pentecostal theology being of product of Evangelical theology on two perspectives from both ecclesiological and theological perspectives. The ecclesiological queries about the sus generis nature of Pentecostalism as a movement while the theological wonders whether the distinctiveness of Pentecostal spirituality does not occasion or even demands its theological account. He thus affirms that this distinction does not mean there are no connections between the two.

(Peters, 2009:139). These areas have further understood in a way they “fit into the modernist Mosaic of a human-centred or bottom-up type of approach to life” (2009:139). Such connections between Protestantism with prosperity gospel could likely result in contradiction with what has been and is the claim of evangelical Protestantism. So, Peters observes:

While on the one hand, Protestantism promised to liberate Christians from the work-centred soteriology of the Roman church, on the contrary, its faith and graced centered soteriology ended up supporting the same human-centered approach to life from which Protestantism was promising to liberate its followers (Peters, 2009:140).

The mention of human-centered ideology, however, could be suggested as the ‘heartbeat’ of prosperity gospel’s teaching (Lioy, 2007:43; Peters, 2009:143; Togarasei, 2011:339; Schiemann & Jung, 2012:740). Perhaps, the reason is that they emphasize on, and towards human self rather than other aspects involving human existence. For instance, as important as human well-being is, other facets which could either be psychological, political, social, emotional to mention but a few, that might be endangering the flourishing of life need to be stressed too. For unlike the classical Pentecostalism whose focus is on enhancing holiness and righteousness, the prosperity gospel on the other side focuses more on human person’s concerns of here and now, with less or no emphasis on holiness and other doctrines. Also, Gifford declares, “they emphasize God’s blessings of material prosperity and abundance unto those Christians who faithfully depend on God” (1998:39).

Considering the emphasis of early propagators of prosperity gospel in North America, it is important to note that their focus contributed immensely to the spread of the movement. Some of the ways which the prosperity gospel got popularized relate to particular areas they center their teachings. One of such is their focus on faith, which later became a ‘movement’ on itself, as will be seen later in the study. Through such focus, the prosperity gospel preachers laid the foundation for the broader ‘faith movement,’ out of which trust in the prosperity gospel emerged (Scheiman & Jung, 2012:739). Though this faith movement was the driving force for Hagin E. Kenneth who in the circle of prosperity gospel called ‘the father of faith movement,’ yet, he was not the only one influenced by that movement, rather, his immediate and future adherents follow sue. This faith movement resulted to why “most Americans also profess the belief that God intercedes and controls outcomes to everyday life” (2012:739; also, see Klause, 2005; Scheiman, 2010). On a similar note, this faith movement convinces those who believe in the prosperity to developing a faith that “God will grant material prosperity or good health to

those with sufficient faith” (Scheiman & Jung, 2012:738). The next section comprises of an analysis of one of the originators of the faith movement already identified above.

### **2.3.2 Hagin E. Kenneth, and Faith movement**

Not only is he called the father of prosperity gospel movement, but he is also known as the father of faith movement (Mumford, 2012:372). Hagin E. Kenneth’s driving force in prosperity gospel was his emphasis on faith, which later earned him a certain pedigree that other word of faith preachers regards him as their mentor (Mumford, 2012:372) both in North America and in Africa particularly, where there are many of his disciples.

However, one of the teachings associated with the faith movement relates to the divine economy which Mumford explains as having to do with “an economic system based on the belief that God wants to provide God’s people with material prosperity” (Mumford, 2012:373).<sup>29</sup> It is a central teaching within the circle of faith movement as they continue to emphasize wealth as a right that every believer ought to have since it is God’s divine plan to have whatever the mouth professes. Also, Mumford presents some views which should give believers an awareness of their position with God that should enable them to make claims of having whatever they ask. First, that Christians should turn their lives over completely to God by recognizing that God, not humanity was the source of all their needs. Secondly, the principle of sowing and reaping, which whatever the believer gave freely to God became a seed for God to multiply back to the believer in the form of meeting their needs. Thirdly, the principle of seed-faith was to expect a miracle immediately after one planted a seed of faith (Mumford, 2012:374).

Some of the disciples of Hagin E. Kenneth that have to continue what he started include his son Kenneth Hagin jr., Kenneth & Gloria Copeland, Fred Price, Creflo Dollar, T.D. Jakes, Benny Hinn to mention but a few. They continue with emphasis on the spoken word (word of faith) as they discharge power to accomplish their desires (Machado, 2010:729). These Word of Faith preachers teach that “Christians can control their physical well-being and financial fortunes through their faith” (2010:728). Such high claims here would suggest how they set

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<sup>29</sup> The notion of the divine economy was created and popularized by Oral Roberts University in Tulsa, Oklahoma. This idea says Mumford (2012), is an alternative to the secular economy; the divine economy is activated by faith in the goodness of God and the law of sowing and reaping or seed-faith.

hope in their adherents as at hearing such utterances; they move about to those places for listening to the messages. On the other hand, such claims are significant limitations says Machado,<sup>30</sup> “emphasis on personal, individualistic economic gain because of every clear-cut relation with God where negotiations for a blessing is a core element” (2010:728).

Another part of faith movement worth mentioning relates to what Daisy calls “a connection between capitalism and evangelicalism” (2010:729). The faith movement preachers uphold this and instill into their hearers “a belief in the power of the individual with the idea that a capitalist society provides equal opportunity for all, and hold an unyielding work ethic combined with a conviction that prosperity is part of God’s design for humanity” (2010:729). Thus opting for an individualistic notion of Christianity that is human-centered in its fullest. On the contrary, however, Daisy articulates what could be a supposed limitation of the faith movement, she says:

This type of Christianity is not about the sacrament and does not focus on a life beyond death; it does not seek to address social ills or social injustices and does not question or critique any economic or government policy. It promotes the accumulation of capital that is meant to change one’s social class and can lead to wealth; thus, one’s religion is supposed to enlarge and expand one’s vision of what can be in the here and now (2010:729).

As such, it suggests that the outright focus of these faith movement preachers pays less or no attention to what was the focus of early Pentecostalism that gave rise to them namely, righteousness and holiness. Instead, a shift in focus on wealth as the right of every believer. Thus, thwarts the emphasis of holiness and righteousness as such claims make their adherents desire to become rich no matter the cost.

### **2.3.3 Essek W. Kenyon and the Healing Movement**

Not only is he described as the source of prosperity gospel in North America, Kenyon’s involvement includes amongst other things the emphasis on healing. His interest in healing was probably due to a personal experience with an illness as described by Mumford after he got healed of peritonitis, an inflammation of the membrane lining, the abdominal cavity (2012:373). After the healing from the sickness, Kenyon expressed disbelief that “Christians

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<sup>30</sup> Daisy L. Machado is a professor of church history with special focus on U.S. Christianity and Academic Dean at Union Theological Seminary, New York. She is the first U.S. Latina ordained in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in 1981 in the Northeast Region and has served inner-city congregations in Brooklyn, Houston, and Fort Worth.

should be sick” (Olagunju, 2009:150) holding that it is not an ideal concept that a believer in Christ Jesus as he was, to be ill or suffer any form of such.

However, Kenyon’s understanding here could be viewed as myopic, in that it focuses on only one aspect of health namely, a physical ailment as if it were an end in itself (Ngong, 2009:1) without making a referral to other areas of life. Thus, shows the limitation of his conceptualization of health in the context of the preliminary study which looks toward establishing a holistic view of the concept which comprises the wellness of other facets of humanity to enhance flourishing. For there are other areas of life threatening beyond the just absence of physical ailments which when free would result in a level where one could express full understanding of humanness. Hence for Kenyon, his claims on divine healing were the fact that since our healing took place on the cross of Calvary, he had the conviction that Christians are not to be sick anymore (Olagunju, 2009:150). Better put in the language of the prosperity gospel, ‘sickness or any form of suffering is not the portion of Christians who believe and having enough faith.’

As part of his healing movement, Kenyon as noted elsewhere, established schools where he incorporated part of his interest in the curriculum that students might learn. Mumford notes “he trained students in evangelism, mission and divine healing” (2012:373). The inclusion of divine healing as part of Kenyon’s curriculum marked the beginning of what would later become a major focus of many prosperity preachers either those who attended the school or were taught by others in practice. Hence, “healing became a significant part of his ministry” (2012:373).

Further, as part of his ministry with a focus on healing, Olagunju observes, Kenyon “did not consider sickness or disease to be real... As he sees symptoms are not real indicators of illness or disease, but distractions by the devil tempting him/her into making negative confessions” (2009:151). To this end, overemphasis on divine healing and how Kenyon alongside other prosperity gospel preachers claim it has caused series of confusion even among their adherents. Such confusions are such that, their listeners find difficulty in reconciling between the dichotomy in sickness and disease. In affirmation of such emphasis which creates confusion, Olagunju while quoting the words of Hagin, the father of faith movement laments,

by confessing that we are healed through the death of Jesus, healing will be manifest in our bodies, and the symptoms of our sickness must be ignored, and confession of perfect health must be maintained. Any sign that contradicts the faith of perfect health is of Satan (2009:151).

This sort of confusion noted above seem to create among the adherents of prosperity gospel calls for attention, such that they call for further addressing. With this discussion on divine healing in mind, the focus went beyond the shores of North America and was imported to Africa and flourish. Hence, further analysis of prosperity gospel continues with looking at its arrival in Africa as the context which this study is situated.

## **2.4 Prosperity Gospel in Africa**

The waves of prosperity gospel/theology came to African contexts through the various disciples of the pioneers in North America, namely, Hagin E. Kenneth (SNR), and Essek W. Kenyon, with emphasis on faith movement and divine healing respectively. At arrival to Africa, prosperity gospel has had a conducive ground for growth (Togarasei, 2011:336). It probably could have been due to its focus on health, success, wealth, and prosperity on the one hand, and the desperation for living a much better life which others see as comprising of the above mentioned on the contrary.

In African prosperity gospel, Togarasei (2011) identifies that one of the earlier recipients of this gospel of prosperity in Africa is the late Nigerian Archbishop Benson Idahosa (2011:339). As the pioneers of the movement in North America who are accorded titles due to their influence, Idahosa has a description of “a mentor to multitude prosperity preachers” (Ayegboyin, 2006:74). In addition to his influence in the lives of other successors called Idahosa’s disciples, is the fact that he ordained them, says Ayegboyin (2006). Moreover, on his part as the pioneer of this gospel of prosperity in Africa, Idahosa founded and established “The Church of God Mission in Benin, Nigeria” (2006:74). Further, like his North American counterparts, Idahosa is described as “the prime celebrity of material preaching” (2006:74), with one of his prominent emphasis as expecting a miracle...you are made for success and not for failure” (Ayegboyin, 2006:74).

This movement at arrival has made concerted efforts through its teaching to enhance rapid expansion though was initially “regarded as temporary” (Folarin, 2007:69). However, its growth has over the time suggests that careful attention is paid to understand what is responsible for the rapid increase in African contexts. One of the factors relating to this could include the way in which many parts of Africa are characterized in relation “with the issues of poverty and as home to the world’s poorest people” (Togarasei, 2011:336) such that gospel which promises prosperity and wealth could easily be integrated.

In another sense, the rapid expansion of prosperity gospel in the African continent may probably have a connection with the desperation of a good life,<sup>31</sup> Seeing that effort towards reaching a good life “is something that nearly everybody does” (Lovin, 2000:10). Thus, could be suggested as the reason making Africans to some extent, “vulnerable to the gospel of wealth” (Folarin, 2007:70). Such vulnerability intensifies the emphasis that, “since we need money to have our mouth satisfied, we need to know the principles for securing the money...Do not attempt to stop making demands on God until requirements come to fruition with real things” (Asamoah-Gyadu, 2005:202). Perhaps, the assurance of getting wealth and health on the ground of having faith in God through believing has resulted to why prosperity gospel “found fertile ground in African communities” (Togarasei, 2011:336).

As to wealth and health, it is crucial to be aware that those are not all that is desirable for a good life. For just as others equate the life of health and wealth to be useful lives, the context of this study sees what characterizes the most required life from a different dimension, as one which includes “peace, well-being, and completeness” (Kretzschmar e al., 2009:15). To that end, Togarasei elaborates on what he sees comprising the needs of Africans in particular, as “lack of basic needs for survival...including food, water, shelter, health care and education” (2011:336). Putting these together would constitute what informs the life that has become the quest amidst human communities namely, good life.

Moreover, further, on their emphasis on health as one of the core needs of humanity, Asamoah-Gyadu opines, “the underlying theory of the prosperity gospel is that God rewards faithful Christians with good health, financial success and material wealth” (2005:202). In another scene, he quotes a prosperity gospel teacher saying, “God satisfies our mouth with good things; God wants us to be happy, he wants us to be buoyant, and so he blesses us with prosperity, not poverty” (2005:202).

Such are motivations within prosperity gospel circles preachers which their teaching affirms include that “prosperity theology makes the emphasis that God will open the windows of

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<sup>31</sup> For so many people, Lovin (2000) sayss, desire a good life, but then an understanding of what a good life really is, may pose a problem which could lead to a pursuit of something wrong in the name of a good life. For instance, what others seek as good life is “primarily seeking what popular culture could call ‘the good life,’ a life built around pleasant and interesting experiences, with enough money and leisure so that you can choose what to do with yourself” (Lovin, 2000:10).



heaven and pour out a blessing to the faithful Christians who consistently give money to his local church” (Lee, 2007:231).

#### **2.4.1 Prosperity Gospel and Salvation**

The preceding discussion on prosperity gospel and what encompasses their teaching has shown that their teachings had motivated the expansion of the movement in Africa especially since growing on the fertile ground. Several factors responsible for this rapid growth of prosperity gospel in Africa as highlighted above have included messages that make their adherents eager to pursue since those messages promise better life if one has enough faith. However, as one of the elements of this study constitutes salvation, it is of enormous importance to survey through prosperity gospel to glance at what they teach as salvation. For as noted elsewhere above, the doctrine of salvation has had several ways of interpretations within Christian theology with one of the variations coming from the prosperity gospel. This difference arises when prosperity gospel lay significant emphasis on material possession than on other facets of human existence since their understanding of salvation is motivated by evidence (Bitrus, 2016:336).

Not very far from the traditional understanding of salvation in Christian theology that significant changes in the life of an individual portray the new-found way of life, so also it is with the prosperity gospel. It seems to bring an agreement since both Christian theology in general, and prosperity gospel, in particular, each has anticipations of signs to show that a change has occurred solely because of salvation (Larbi, 1996:266). Whereas prosperity gospel stresses that “prosperity of all kinds is the right of every Christian such as God wants a Christian to be wealthy” (Gifford, 1990:375), Christian theology emphasizes on “saving creatures and reconciling them to their creator” (Davidson & Rae, 2011:15). Such are indications of the dichotomy in understanding salvation as a concept because there is not a direct correlation between the two views.

The variation seen in the above approaches in salvific discourse relates to a dichotomy between the salvation of the soul and body. For as it is, classical Christian theology’s primary concern on salvation is toward finding “the way back to God, to live with God, to live with God and share in the divine” (Kärkkäinen, 2004:1). The prosperity gospel, on the contrary, has amongst other concerns hold about the obvious solution to all social ills of the society, provided the conversion to Christianity has taken place (Mumford, 2012:378). Perhaps, prosperity gospel interprets salvation of the soul as “deliverance from sin and growth in spiritual maturity;



whereas salvation of the body as deliverance from sickness, demon possession and oppression, and poverty” (Folarin, 2007:81). In a clearer sense, prosperity gospel sees salvation as “something to be experienced” (Asamoah-Gyadu, 2005:133) otherwise put, experiential; where physical evidence is proof of its presence. They hold to this with the conviction that salvation no poverty, sickness, or depression to anyone .... because such adversities stem from insufficient faith, sin, or ignorance” (Bitrus, 2016:335). Thus leaving those who unfortunately are unable to show those evidence as due to their deficiency of faith in God or unconfessed sin they might have committed. Such conception pays little or no attention to the various causes of misfortunes in most societies which result to why the said evidence of salvation does not apply to them. Instead, the attention is most often than not focused on a few who have the privilege to attend to the standard, thus reducing salvation to just a few and not for all as God intends for creation.

From that purview, it is evident that the prosperity gospel emphasizes salvation as “not just redemption from sin, but also as a victory that Christ won over evil forces that impede human flourishing” (2016:335). As such, aligning their consciousness on the life ‘here and now’ (Kärkkäinen, 2010:85; Bitrus, 2016:335). It is, however, this sense of ‘here and now’ perception of salvation that brings amongst many, the emphasis on health and wealth which we shall see in the next lines of this section. Seeing that the two concepts have already been stated elsewhere above as the core pillars in understanding the prosperity gospel in general, and its portrayal of salvation in particular.

Not only is success taken as proof for one’s salvation, but health and wealth as well. Asamoah-Gyadu sees salvation in this sense as “a package embracing not just a personal conversion or new birth, but also healing and deliverance” (2005:168). Emphasizing on faith as the gateway to actualizing whatever one claims, adherents of prosperity gospel “insist that faith is a supernatural force that believers use to get whatever form of personal success they want, including physical health and material wealth” (Lioy, 2003:42). The mention of this faith here implies its relation to right standing with God as that which must yield the blessings of good health, prosperity, and wealth” (2013:368). Thus, leaving us with the indication that healthy and wealthy lifestyles are indicators for salvation which now leads to see how crucial the two concepts convey the understanding of what salvation entails.

#### 2.4.1.1 Health as evidence for Salvation

The ongoing study adopts the idea of health as that which relates to all that encompasses other facets of life other than just an ‘absence of physical illness.’ Such conception of the word is paramount and an essential element to this study as it relates to the vast expansion of prosperity gospel in Africa, especially. It is equally important to note that, several factors are responsible for many ill-health situations. For instance, some could be termed sick by simply feeling isolated from relationships with other individuals, which is all there is they desire to heal. To such ones, their concerns are longing to belong, to be treated fairly and to know whom they are in the midst of a vast universe, seeing that those are part of the quest of being human (Kretzschmar *et al.*, 2009:3). Such would be all of what would make them feel the sense of belonging as such words have the capacity to speak life to such individuals at such times. Another example of ill-health could be yearning for liberation from corrupt and wicked leadership, structural violence, injustice to mention but a few which hinders humanity in general from living flourishing lives. Those structures occur on individuals regardless of their degree of belief or commitment to a religion or perhaps, church but often as natural happenings at most occasions. Nevertheless, the prosperity gospel lay claims that “for a child of God, rational principles of politics or economy do not apply because a Christian should prosper under any political regime” (Gifford, 2007:23).

That notion in a sense could lead to some confusion as to why the difficulty that is caused by injustices and corruption should not affect the society or that, people should not bother on that. Such views could limit the capacity of the church to engage and challenge the state and to, unfortunately, lay claims that a child of God should strive to prosper in such societies. In such instances, the healing that is desirable includes a call for leaders “who will rule or manage with justice and fairness; who will exercise compassion and mercy and who care for and can be accountable to the people” (Kretzschmar *et al.*, 2009:x). With the above dispositions, the prosperity gospel preachers still address sickness, not the portion of a believer as they emphasize health a right of every believer (Golo, 2013:3680. Which then sees being healthy as evidence for salvation.

Nonetheless, with the above survey into indicators of salvation, a quick reflection on others who though believe in the gospel message – to mean salvation- but yet, are unable to show the said evidence is crucial to note. With their emphasis on choice above as that which one could make to have their statuses changed, prosperity gospel relates that to reasons behind the

inability to living flourishing lives. Hence, such assertions with wealth, health as proofs of salvation are said to deny or refuse to accept that “suffering is part of Christian life” (Quayesi – Amakye, 2011:295). It does not mean here that any suffering for a Christian is justified, but to revert the idea of ‘suffering is not your portion’ proclaim by prosperity gospel is problematic not only to living a Christian life but also with regards to understanding salvation. However, prosperity gospel’s assertion of salvation through visible indicators seems to indicate a moving away from societal influences which affect even their adherents, thus

Materialistic gospel just ignores the political and economic reasons for so much poverty we find around us; dependent economies are resulting in fluctuating prices, overgrazing, global warming, environmental degradation, overpopulation, corruption, mismanagement, destabilization and wrong priorities (Ayeshola, 2005:38).

Emphasizing on the proofs of salvations which many do not attain, the prosperity gospel neglects what seems to affect the lives of their adherents including the weak and marginalized among them. As such, the above factors hindering humanity from flourishing falls to their favor. For when the focus of salvation relies on riches, health, and success as proofs for salvation and not on the wholeness of oneself or society, then several of those mentioned above such as corruption and others would be on the increase, and the effect on the marginalized, oppressed would be in an increase too. For until such a tune takes prominence, the quest for harmonization of oneself would be hard to reach.

#### **2.4.1.2 Salvation as being wealthy/successful**

Another major emphasis in the prosperity gospel theology and salvation noted above relates to wealth with a focus as “God will meet you at your point of need” (Gifford, 2007:20). Among the propagators of wealth is Oyedepo whose ministry amongst other things proclaims wealth as “right and inheritance of an individual” (Gifford, 2007:22).<sup>32</sup> Thus having the idea of wealth as a pointer to what should characterize life and in particular, an evidence of one’s level of faithfulness and commitment.

Considering the realities of most societies in general, and Africa in particular, there are disparities as having to do with how communities are stratified when it comes to living standards. Within the context of the prosperity gospel, however, one’s ability to being wealthy

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<sup>32</sup> Bishop David Oyedepo began the church that is popularly known as ‘the Living Faith’ (a.k.a. winners chapel), which boasts to having the largest auditorium in the world (Lindhardt, 2015:115).

or successful depends on their faithfulness such that “real faithfulness leads to prosperous living” (Withrow, 2007:27). In fact, in some instances, it is the emphasis on the power of spoken words from where they stress that “the miracle of wealth is in one’s mouth to confess it and walk in it” (Olagunju, 2009:149). They hold this following the fact that God spoke the universe into existence and so Christians can speak things into life or conceive of things in their minds and speak them to reality (2009:150). Thus making some confirmation as to why being wealthy or successful is a choice which is within one’s power to speak it out and get what they want by the spoken words. The other side of this coin which sets confusion within this circle relates to the failure of spoken words to act accordingly. The result of which has caused and could cause more confusion not just to those attempting the magic of spoken words but in efforts to ascertain what grasp what salvation entails in real life experience.

## **2.5 Conclusion**

A survey of the teaching of prosperity gospel from their origin and the early propagators adds to widening the scope of this study. Thus, various components of prosperity gospel ranging from the preachers, what characterizes their understanding of salvation, and why Africa had become a fertile ground for this gospel of prosperity was stressed. Further, one of the points of concern in the survey of prosperity gospel in Africa includes the contradictions in their soteriology, such that what they teach does not apply even in the contexts of most of their adherents. For instance, the sole focus of equating salvation to success, wealth, healing as divine mandates do not apply and so are not capable of addressing certain needs of their adherents as they promise.

When the teaching of prosperity gospel does not have clear goals gearing towards the enhancement of wholeness of life, there could be a possibility of its decline in viability with various studies coming up. Seeing that these studies could bring better and broader clarifications which might be disproof what they hold as salvation and its relation to health and wealth. That would probably result in having an understanding of physical realities and how to ascertain salvation therein, thus would reduce or wipe out confusions within the circle itself as there are contrasts between what they preach and the experiences in real life by their adherents.

The fact that this study tries to explore the therapeutic interpretations of salvation, it is proper to see it beyond the evidential model studied from the prosperity gospel with wealth and physical health as its base. However, another perspective which we shall study in the next

chapter could give another overview to the broader understanding of the subject matter. Thus we turn to seeing salvation in the presence of physical and structural reconstruction.

## Chapter 3: Salvation, Liberation, and Reconstruction in Conversation with Jesse N. K. Mugambi

### 3.1 Introduction

With the previous discussion on the prosperity gospel theology of salvation, we make a turn to engage one of the distinguished African theologians from the Eastern part of the continent (Kenya) namely, Jesse N. K. Mugambi. In this section, we shall concentrate on examining Mugambi's soteriological contributions especially regarding the notions of liberation and reconstruction. It provides a close look, not only at his theological proposition but also at the ongoing struggles in the African context which could suggest a better perception of holistic salvation from the multidimensional problems that hinder the flourishing of life.

### 3.2 Background of Jesse N. K. Mugambi

Jesse Ndwiga Kanyun Mugambi (born, 1947-) is a Kenyan Anglican theologian<sup>33</sup>. As one among the numerous African theologians, he is known for his esteemed work on the 'theology of reconstruction,' and "remains one of the best-known proponents of reconstruction theology in Africa" (Loba-Mkole, 2009:28; Mwaura, 2008:3). In fact, a leading voice in proposing the theology of reconstruction in the African continent. Regarding responsibilities and involvement, Mugambi has been involved and still involves in several roles where his theological contributions have been of tremendous relevance. Some of which include; Member of the Kenyan Academy of Science (MKNAS); EBS (Member of the National Order of Elder of the Burning Spear) (Mugambi, 2013:7). He is a visiting professor at different institutions

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<sup>33</sup> Jesse Ndwiga Kanyun Mugambi, a "Kenyan theologian" (Mwaura, 2015:19) was born on 6 February 1947 in Kiangoci near ST Mark's College, Kigari in Ngandori location, Manyatta division Embu district in the Eastern province of Kenya – East Africa (Gathogo, 2006:5). His rural home continues Gathogo, is near the famous center of the Anglican church Kigari, which was established by the 19<sup>th</sup> century English missionaries in 1909-1910. Like most other African children, Gathogo, (2006:6) declares that Mugambi was brought up by his mother Jemimah Kori Kanyua and a well-informed father, Timothy Kanyua Mugambi -whom he describes as a person who was ahead of his time. Further on his upbringing, Gathogo continues to say, Mugambi was also influenced by his grandfather, Mzee Mugambi Wa Nthigai – who was an elder statesman who arbitrated over disputes and provided advice and counsel to many people – (*of course to Jesse also*), who came to consult him for advice. More so, his paternal grandfather, who was Njeru Wa Kanyenje, greatly contributed to Jesse Mugambi's nurture before he went to serve in the carrier corps in what then Tanganyeka during the first world war. In regard to his academic attainments, Mugambi has attended various institutions both within Africa and Europe respectively. Among these is University of Manitoba, Canada, 1992 (senior University administrator's certificate; Institute of Social Studies, The Hague, Netherlands; the University of Nairobi where he both had his MA in Philosophy and Religious Studies and Ph.D. (Mugambi, 2013:2).

both within Africa and beyond where he has served and still serves in various capacities, has written, edited and co-authored several books.<sup>34</sup>

From a more detailed perspective, Jesse N. K. Mugambi is a long-time professor in the Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies at the Kenya's premier University of Nairobi. A talented speaker and lecturer of worldwide recognition and fame, and an African (indeed pan-African) theologian and ecumenist of rare convictions, passion, and resilience. Mugambi's philosophical and theological thinking extends far beyond the African continent and its interest to touch issues of worldwide concern (cf. Magesa 2013:187-88).

In this chapter, we shall engage with thoughts around some of his notable works (e.g. Mugambi 1989, 1995, 2003, Mugambi & Magesa 1998, Mugambi & Vähäkangas 2001). The appropriation of Mugambi's theological contributions in South African socio-economic, political and religious contexts by E. M Conradie (2015:62-71) would be a great companion in the consideration and discussion of Mugambi's thoughts. For it would further enrich our discussion on soteriology in the presence of prosperity theologies and the former colonial, socioeconomic and even ongoing political and religious injuries in contemporary Africa.

Similar to most scholars who are indebted to their contexts, Mugambi generates his theological contributions after a careful observation of his environment and so situates his thoughts. As one who is African, he seeks to join other fellow scholars "who have articulated their brands of Christian theologies consciously and deliberately" (Ford & Muers, 2005:485) within their contexts and even beyond. With that in mind, the incorporation of Mugambi's theology of reconstruction<sup>35</sup> here gears toward assessing his thoughts which might relate to the discussion that this study undertakes namely, a holistic understanding of salvation. To that end, it is of utmost importance to survey through Mugambi's passion from where the theology he seeks to develop or that which he is developing emanates and how to situate it properly to the ongoing study.

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<sup>34</sup> See Mugambi's full CV: June 2013.

<sup>35</sup> The reference to Mugambi and theology of reconstruction does not depict that he is the only African theologian that undertakes that field of research alone- there are others such as Charles Villa-Vicencio of South Africa and Kä Mana the Congolese (Gathogo, 2006; 2009:100). The reason why most reference will be on him is sole because he is the focus of the discussion here whose thoughts are surveyed. Yes, other counterparts of reconstruction theology might be engaged as well.

### 3.3 Situating Mugambi's Theology of Reconstruction

The emerging challenges facing Africa in the 21<sup>st</sup> century are those which would require a somewhat new methodological approach in Mugambi's thoughts. The actualization of such approach would in Mugambi's thoughts, demand a collaborative effort. So he invites "African theologians to make a theological reflection on the way forward in African Christianity after the demise of apartheid and cold war" (Gathogo, 2009:100) as the continent experiences a new era. As an individual with concern, Mugambi concentrates "on the global patterns following the end of the cold war and its relevance for the postcolonial and post-apartheid Africa" (2009:100). As a result, that gives him the courage to the calling that Africa must shift her theological emphasis from the exodus motif to the reconstructive motive, seeing that reconstruction for him is the new priority for African nations in the 1990s and beyond" (2009:100).

As such, he suggests that "reconstruction as a paradigm is relevant" (1995: viii) which he sees as "pre-eminently a contextual theology" (Vill-Vicencio, 1992:41). The new theological paradigm Mugambi suggests is actually, "the latest theological project coming out of Africa" (Gunda, 2009:84; Mugambi, 1997:1; Gathogo, 2009:99). Such that it "explicitly addresses the present needs of a particular society" (Villa-Vicencio, 1992:40) perhaps, Africa. To that end, Mugambi (Gathogo, 2009:100) calls the post- colonial Africa to change its focus instead, to the challenging issues. Some of which as neocolonialism, refugee crisis, debt crisis, inculturation of the Gospel, attending to the plight of the marginals in the society such as women, children and the disabled (2009:100). For him, this forms one of the tasks of the theology of reconstruction which is "pastoral in nature such that it seeks to restore the African walls that are in dire need of renewal" (2009:100). Situating this theological model properly would invite us to focus on Mugambi's lived experiences which have shaped his theological thinking.

An attempt to seeing how Mugambi's lived experience shapes his motivation for reconstruction theology, Julius Gathogo's<sup>36</sup> summary could give us some insights. According to Gathogo (2006:10), three out of the many experiences Mugambi has encountered in his life

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<sup>36</sup> Julius Gathogo, holds a Ph.D. in theology from the University of Kwazulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg, South Africa and a Kenyan by origin. He declares his vision as to be a "co-worker with God in the reconstruction project of our beloved African society." *See his CV*



journey is worth mentioning. The first experience was the “*Mau Mau* war of liberation”<sup>37</sup> Which started between 1952 to 1960 and gained strength in the 1974 – the year Mugambi was born” (2006:10-11). The war was “a protest movement against colonial rule, oppression, exploitation, discrimination, dehumanization, and the grabbing of their land by the white settlers” (2006:10). However, in Gathogo’s narrative, Mugambi’s first experience which would later inform his theological thinking was how the “the British government sanctioned the torture of *Mau Mau* supporters and sympathizers” (2006:10). A process which Mugambi says “shaped my childhood” (2006:10).

The second significant experience was Mugambi’s encounter with the Missionaries, where suppression of the African culture was the order of the day, even in the church (2006:11). Quoted in Gathogo (2006), Mugambi posits that during the period of (1952-1962) with the *Mau Mau* experience, the missionary agencies fully supported the colonial regime. For they taught us, Mugambi says, to be willing subjects and yet, expected us to respect them. To this Mugambi declares “we rejected this ideological misappropriation by the missionary establishments” (Gathogo, 2006:11).

The third experience in Mugambi’s life was in connection with the events that surrounded the celebration of National independence on 12 December 1963<sup>38</sup> (Gathogo 2006). What became significant to Mugambi, however, were the words of Jomo Kenyatta to the Kenyans which read; “take destiny into your hands and make a clear break with the colonial past” (Gathogo, 2006:12). Mugambi, however, after the above address came up with a determination that resulted in encouraging the Kenyans on the one hand, and to affirm the words of Kenyatta on the contrary, thus said “read, start reconstructing yourselves -you now have what it takes to do so” (2006:12).

This conclusion by Mugambi probably shaped his thoughts toward developing an interest in ‘the theology of reconstruction.’ With the above illustrations on the lived experiences of Mugambi, some of which began during his childhood suffice to say; he could write from

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<sup>37</sup> This war of the agitation says Gathogo (2006) for Kenyan’s national liberation gained momentum between 1952-1960). It was a time when one group of fighters otherwise called *the Anake a forti* – meaning the ‘forty group’ came into the limelight.

<sup>38</sup> This celebration of the independence featured the release of Jomo Kenyatta who has been in the prison cell and a verdict of the impossibility for his release was already given by the colonial leaders. The same person was later to become the president of Kenya (Gathogo, 2006:11).

experience about what he wishes to contribute to the discussions on reconstruction. As such, Gathogo declares that from those experiences and as Mugambi writes on liberation and reconstruction in African Christian Theology; “one cannot help but see a scholar who has lived with both concepts throughout his life” (2006:13).

### **3.4 Mugambi’s New Theological Paradigm: Reconstruction**

Taking reconstruction as a theological paradigm, Mugambi identifies with what he foresees as impending challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century Africa. He does this while trying to reflect back on the image of the colonial Africa which he describes as a “dark continent” (1995:49) that in his vision should be replaced with a “bright continent” (1995:49; Gathogo, 2007:123). For Mugambi, this dark African continent he sees from the point of the colonial image he describes as the “sleeping question mark” (1995:49) which to him is to be replaced by a new one as the “waking answer” (1995:49). However, then, the question of how the change would come about probably relates to creating a new paradigm from where new ways of viewing events and addressing them could emerge. Perhaps, the introduction of reconstruction as a model that is relevant for the 21<sup>st</sup>-century Africa which Mugambi says “has not been emphasized even in those countries<sup>39</sup> Where wars of national liberation were waged” (1997:1). Thus, emphasizing the relevance of the new model.

From the above purview with Mugambi’s idea of replacing the former vision of African continent during the colonial era, comes the identification of a new paradigm namely, reconstruction. For Mugambi, reconstruction “is done when an existing complex becomes dysfunctional for whatever reason, and the user still requires to use it” (1995:12). This concept of reconstruction Loba-Mkole (2009:29) asserts is notably amongst scholars refer to its claim to offer an alternative thinking for mobilizing resources to build the post-Cold-War Africa. Thus, situating the above contributions within the context which Mugambi has in mind, we could state the role of reconstructive theology in its context. Such could be within a context of “nation building, the weight of dead generations, the rule of law and values, human rights,

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<sup>39</sup> In countries, such as Kenya and Algeria Mugambi (1997:1) observes, “national wars for independence were fought, but the notion of reconstruction was not popularized after the attainment of constitutional independence”. Though the wars destroyed a great deal of the physical and social infrastructure, Mugambi asserts, yet, the development plans of these countries did not include the theme of reconstruction in their national agenda. The seemingly contrast Mugambi sees, is in the case of South Africa, that “after the abolition of Apartheid, reconstruction was declared as a national motto in 1994” (1997:2).

politics, economy, and the right to believe” (2009:32). With such claims, there are speculations from the proponents of reconstruction theology with its relevance which they say suggests “proactive actions that would denounce poverty and remove poverty from the society” (2009:34; cf. Farisani 2004:78). Such assertions seen within the context of the ongoing study would speak of not only denouncing poverty literally but an action toward creating a holistic solution to poverty. The above claims of reconstructive theological movement when viewed through the lenses of the ongoing study that tries to reconceptualizing salvation as healing, it could fit well within the confines of reconstruction.

From the intended aim of reconstruction theology which has amongst other elements ‘to denounce poverty in the society’ thus brings a nexus to what Mugambi sees as dehumanizing.<sup>40</sup> In his categorization of dehumanizing situations, Mugambi mentions “poverty, captivity, oppression, prejudice, physical illness, and estrangement from God” (1989b:41). Those he sees as factors through which life-threatening situations that hinder flourishing and experiencing the wholeness of life operates. Since for Mugambi, it was a priority that “Jesus’ concerned involved the humanization of the whole person in the context of the whole society” (1989b:41). Thus, he suggests that “the Church has a theological obligation to heed such correction to overcome any shortcomings in its Christian ministry” (1989b:41). Such could, however, set reconstruction theology in the sphere of public theology in the sense that “it strives to make a transformative impact on society by bringing the Christian values into the public arena” (Epombo-Mwenge 2010:65; Gathogo, 2009:100). Such values which could generate the desire for seeing the factors mentioned above as that calling for some salvation – the one which this study describes as encompassing all other facets of life and not only the conventional understanding of soul saving.

To that end, reconstruction could now be a task which demands the efforts of both individuals and the society. Taking the Church, for instance, the task which it would be involved in relates to the attestation that “reconstruction paradigm is meant to build all sectors of life in Africa, including Church ministries” (Loba-Mkole, 2009:28). This task understood holistically, relates

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<sup>40</sup> Mugambi (1989:40) says a dehumanizing situation is one in which human beings are hindered from realizing their full humanity. And so, dehumanizing situations he continues, exist in human society in many forms and are experienced in almost all historical contexts.

to “liberating/restoring people from a depraved situation of life to develop a new one in which it is good to live” (Epombo-Mwege, 2010:17).

Taking his analysis through the well-known biblical narrative of Israelites often call ‘the Exodus’ story or experience, Mugambi sees the story as a reference point which “Liberation as a theme which drives Christian theological reflection” (1995:2). With his interest in proposing a neo-theological paradigm that African theological scholarship in his view should adopt, came to fruition at a gathering<sup>41</sup> of which he was invited to present a paper. Mugambi being aware of the struggles Africans have had during the colonial era suggests<sup>42</sup> that “reconstruction should be the new priority for African nations in the 1990s and beyond” (Phiri & Gathogo, 2010:3; Gathogo, 2009:99-100).

The challenge which Mugambi foresaw that led to proposing this new theological paradigm and the rejection of the Exodus paradigm relates to the advancement of what he termed the “New World Order” (Farisani, 2010:512). This idea of the ‘New World Order’ Mugambi sees it encroaching “after the end of colonialism, apartheid, and cold war as posing a challenge for us to be very creative and innovative” (2010:512). Such problems and the thoughts for new theological model could enable African theology to “speak to the local situation” (Maluleke, 2000:204) other than what the bondage of colonialism, cold war and apartheid upheld. It is to this end that Mugambi sees the innovation of a new approach to theology that would be relevant to the impending new era to differ with the metaphor of Exodus which has been in use by liberation theologians<sup>43</sup> as “inappropriate and irrelevant” (2010:513; Gathogo, 2007:124). The result of which he grew confidence in introducing the new paradigm using Ezra-Nehemiah involvement with the exiled Jews as a model for a reconstruction theology. Perhaps, he declares that Old Testament figures are “not only an exemplary character but also as leaders who represent the aspiration and contradiction of Africa’s social reconstruction” (2010:513).

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<sup>41</sup> At the Nairobi meeting on 30 March 1990, Mugambi suggested about the shift in postcolonial Africa. Phiri & Gathogo (2010:2) record Mugambi's proposal of his new paradigm saying “various theological articulations in postcolonial Africa be it South African Black Theology, African women's theology, Liberation theology or cultural theology he says, need to shift its theological emphasis from the Exodus motif to the reconstruction motif.

<sup>42</sup> In Yaoundé Cameroon at the Eighth AACC Assembly, (Phiri & Gathogo, 2010:3) for a theology of reconstruction had become prominent such it became the theme for November 30, 2003, which had the theme as “Come, let us rise and build.”

<sup>43</sup> One of the liberation theologians -a known African feminist, Mercy Oduyoye also uses the imagery of Exodus in discussing her soteriology. An elaboration of her usage of Exodus paradigm will be discussed in a chapter about her.

Mugambi views some contrasts between the two models; whereas Mugambi says, the theology of liberation focused on the Exodus and Moses, while the theology of reconstruction focuses on Ezra and Nehemiah in their post- exilic leadership roles (2003:146, Gathogo, 2009:112). The latter -post-exilic narrative- Mugambi puts “inspires the reconstructive motif in African theology” (Gathogo, 2009:112; Farisani, 2003:31). Moreover, as a model, Mugambi having envisioned the post cold war, post -colonial, and post-apartheid Africa and the encroaching challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> Africa sees the Ezra-Nehemiah scenario as relevant for the theology of reconstruction because of its applicability today (2003:149). As such, he calls for the exilic metaphor concerning Nehemiah instead of the often-used Exodus metaphor.

### **3.5 Situating Ezra-Nehemiah as a Reconstruction Paradigm**

The Exodus<sup>44</sup> event has engulfed African theological discourse on liberation (Mugambi, 2003:146) and one of such theologies is the Feminist theology which Mercy Oduyoye - one of its proponents- is also one of our dialogue partners in the ongoing study. Mugambi (1995:38) attests to the prominence of liberation as that which dominates the 19<sup>th</sup> century<sup>45</sup> and was characterized by slave trade and colonization. Of which he suggests that the emergence of the twenty-first century should also invite African Christians to discern themes other than liberation and Exodus (Farisani, 2003:31). These two dominant concepts Mugambi declares "were preoccupied among African leaders both religious and secular" (1995:38) but surprisingly, Mugambi opines "the role of the Church was exclusively for proclaiming spiritual liberation" (1995:38). Yes, though the Church had, and still has a voice to declare about spiritual liberation, but Mugambi adds to say "they did not seem to appreciate that liberation from sin is necessarily an implied rectification of the adverse social and economic consequences of Sin" (1995:38). In other words, there were efforts by the church to dichotomize its affairs from what concerned the society instead of getting involved to create some impact to the society<sup>46</sup>. From this, Mugambi sees a form of dichotomization between liberation from sin and liberation from social sin – notably slave trade and colonization. Thus, he objects such views by declaring that “there certainly is a connection between liberation from

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<sup>44</sup> Mercy Oduyoye makes use of Exodus event in her discourses on the liberation of African women. Details on that would not be given here, but in the chapter, that discusses her soteriology.

<sup>45</sup> Mugambi (1995) gives a description of the forceful exploitation of African labor eastwards and westwards which was replaced by exploitative economic structures within this continent while producing raw materials for industries in Europe and North America.

<sup>46</sup> See H.R. Niebuhr, 1951. Christ and culture.

the bondage of sin and liberation from colonial bondage, if colonial domination is understood as dehumanizing, and therefore, demonic” (1995:39). Such gave Mugambi the passion, possibly to developing the reconstruction paradigm using Ezra-Nehemiah scenario instead of the continual acceptance of Exodus in African 21<sup>st</sup> century. For unlike the narrative of Exodus liberation and Moses figure, Nehemiah seems to Mugambi a leader which Africa and her people should yearn for in the post-cold war era, post colonial and post apartheid, Africa.

Mugambi (1995) maintains the fact that, Christain theology in Africa within the last century had emphasized the theme of liberation from Exodus and colonial bondage without highlighting the transformative and reconstructive dimensions. With his focus on the social transformation and reconstruction, Mugambi follows the historical events vividly such that the various “commitments to abolish colonization indicate a shift of gear from an emphasis on liberation to engagement in social transformation and reconstruction” (1995:40).

With a careful survey of the intruding 21<sup>st</sup>-century challenges at the time Mugambi’s previous formulations of reconstruction began, he had an anticipated outcome. That he says, unless “the social and physical reality of the continent and its peoples is accurately and comprehensively understood and reinterpreted – *in his view*, then the systematic articulation of human response to revelation will not be effective in the Africa of the 21<sup>st</sup> century” (1995:40). Such an elaborate view of liberation beyond the shores of spiritual sin but that which encompasses the social transformation of lives we could in the context of the study call a holistic liberation. Moreover, with that view in mind, Mugambi opt for Ezra-Nehemiah story over Exodus to portray his theological paradigm.

The emergence of the 21<sup>st</sup> century which falls within the same range with the end of cold war, end of Apartheid (Gathogo, 2007:124), Mugambi describes such moments as the “New World Order” (1995: xv) which calls for a “New language” (1995: xv). This new world order Mugambi suggests, will require a new understanding of the church and a new corresponding theology (1995: xv), a theology which he describes as that which

Should be constructive rather than destructive; inclusive rather than exclusive; proactive rather than reactive; complementary rather than competitive; integrative rather than disintegrative; programme-driven rather than project-driven; people-centred rather than institution-centred; deed-oriented rather than word-oriented; participatory rather than autocratic; regenerative rather than degenerative; future-sensitive rather than past-sensitive; co-operative rather than confrontational; consultative rather than impositional (1995:xv).

The above characterization of Mugambi's New World Order carries an idea of a shift in a theological motif from liberation to reconstruction. Which he opines that "the challenge as we enter the twenty-first century, is to discern other biblical motifs that would be relevant for a theology of transformation and reconstruction" (Farisani, 2003:32). Thus Ezra-Nehemiah motif which to him speaks of reconstruction than liberation becomes the relevant story seeing that "the leadership of Nehemiah contrasts sharply with that of Moses" (Mugambi, 2003:172). Because for him, such leadership focus "is the most encouraging and most inspiring for Africa today" (2003:173). Mugambi's emphasis and reliance on the Ezra-Nehemiah motif of reconstruction than the Exodus entail a remarkable significance. In his thought "the book of Nehemiah explains the process of reconstruction and so affirms that the central biblical text for African Christian theology in the 21<sup>st</sup> century will perhaps, be the book of Nehemiah rather than the book of Exodus" (1995:166).

From the above proceedings, the conviction which Mugambi holds in his preference of the book of Nehemiah other than the book of Exodus indicates that,

In Africa, the theme of Exodus made much sense as long as people viewed their oppression concerning external Pharaohs enslaving their subjects. The imagery was powerful as it managed to mobilize African peoples and nations against colonial domination, institutionalized racism and cold war propaganda (2003:29).

Following the above assertions, three consecutive events<sup>47</sup> Mugambi observes "brought Africa's continental identity into a crisis because its unity focused on liberation from these external Pharaohs" (2003:29).

Taking from the above paradigm with its result to the inauguration of a new metaphor other than liberation, Mugambi declares it as what African desires which for him become a new model for African Christian theology (Farisani, 2003:31). It is to that note he sees the metaphors of liberation and inculturation as old paradigms, and suggesting that "both have expired" (Maluleke, 2000:204), thus argues for a shift of paradigms from liberation to reconstruction (Farisani, 2003:31). In the new situation, Mugambi suggests, "African nations would have to turn to themselves and put their houses in order" (2003:30), seeing the damages

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<sup>47</sup> Mugambi, 2003:29 outlines these events as follows; first, the establishment of the Republic of Namibia after the decades of armed struggle; secondly, the release of Nelson Mandela from life imprisonment after serving twenty-seven years in jail for leading the struggle against Apartheid; thirdly, the collapse of the Soviet Union, thus marking the end of the cold war.



which the old paradigm left them in.<sup>48</sup> To that end, Mugambi affirms that "reconstruction was essential" (2003:30) as it fits into the 21<sup>st</sup> century, Africa. Hence to situate Mugambi's thoughts within the confines of the ongoing study, we at this point could move into analyzing Mugambi's reconstruction theology with his perception on salvation.

### 3.6 Engaging Jesse Mugambi's soteriological understanding

This section gears toward establishing and analyzing Mugambi's thoughts on reconstruction and how he integrates those thoughts into his understanding of soteriology. Since its establishment, reconstruction as a theological paradigm seemed for Mugambi as an ideal alternative model which is suitable for replacing the already known liberation model in African theology. As for him, "both the inculturation and liberation paradigms -*which have since been the models for African theology*- within which African theologies had no longer adequate frameworks for doing African theology after the cold war" (Maluleke, 1997:22). Perhaps for Mugambi, the former models<sup>49</sup> "responded to a situation of ecclesiastical and colonial bondage" (1997:22) which to him, "no longer obtains" (1997:22). Hence for their placement, Mugambi describes what would fit into the 'New World Order,' seeing that those old models were mainly "reactive" and so should be substituted with a "proactive" theology of reconstruction (1997:22; Mugambi, 1995:11).

In efforts to authenticate the new theological model into the realm of soteriology, Mugambi thought it wise to use some models which to him would serve as replacements to the old patterns in the new Africa. Since for him, "the end of the old order should bring about the beginning of the New Order" (1995: xv). Such ideas for Mugambi speaks of forwardness which he asserts as "process thought is consistent with the theology of reconstruction because it appreciates the perennial ebb and the flow of human cultural and religious achievements" (1995: xv).

The new theological models which Mugambi presents as we shall discuss them below, consist some of the prominent doctrines of Christian belief. Taking Africa for instance, and the experiences of cold war, Apartheid, and colonial domination, one could easily think with

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<sup>48</sup> Mugambi, 2003:30 observes that during the wars when Africans fought themselves "civil strife erupted throughout the continent...such that the continent was in ruins".

<sup>49</sup> The former models here refer to the liberation and enculturation, which have always been theological paradigms in African theologies



Mugambi to necessitate the development of the theological pillars within the sphere of the above experiences. To that end, Mugambi sees why “theology at best, must respond to the joys, sorrows, hopes, and fears of the community of faith which the theologian represents” (1995:11). For he sees that “a theologian's primary audience must be the community of faith on whose behalf he or she engages in the theological quest” (1995:11). With the high expressive concerns for Mugambi, he opts for the models of reconstruction, liberation, and reconciliation to integrate his understanding of salvation.

### **3.6.1 Reconstruction as a form of Salvation**

Ernest M. Conradie (2015:62-71) presents us with a fresh look at the philosophical and theological legacy of Jesse Mugambi in his rereading of Mugambi’s theology of reconstruction as a form of soteriology in conversation with his South African context. It is both ironic and necessary to note Conradie’s (2015:62) description of apartheid functioning as “quasi-soteriology” for in it many privileged Afrikaaners in South Africa thought to have salvation in what he reports as ‘deep, dark Africa’ considering political and economic struggles. It is unfortunate that this so-called salvation contributed so much to policies that resulted in dehumanization and racial segregation. Thus, his description of it as “quasi-soteriology” does well in creatively critiquing the ideology within it.<sup>50</sup> Thus, for salvation to be true among any people, we need to see it as an aspect of the true sense of identity that dignifies the people and not does any otherwise.

In their approach to the concept of salvation in theological perspectives, both Mugambi and Conradie selected great salvation metaphors as hermeneutical keys to unlock the meaning of salvation and to point the reader to the significance therein. These concepts comprise “salvation, liberation, and inculturation” and “liberation, reconciliation, and reconstruction” as metaphors than the former<sup>51</sup>. These are the various salvation metaphors that present us with the ‘types of atonement’ as the multidimensional aspects of what salvation entails.<sup>52</sup> Thus as could

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<sup>50</sup> For more on how apartheid has been a form of salvation to those who benefited from the system see Coetzee & Conradie (2010: 112-123).

<sup>51</sup> It is not that the former category does not fit into the context of the ongoing study but that the metaphors in that category would not be thoroughly engaged as the other category. Seeing that, the latter category of metaphors comprising reconciliation, reconstruction is particularly, the bedrock of the Mugambi’s integration in the ongoing study.

<sup>52</sup> Mugambi's understanding of conversion as means to salvation represents his evangelical missions' emphasis on saving the lost for eternal life in God through Jesus Christ (cf. Mugambi 2003). This is not apart from what salvation means to Conradie and the present writer, but it is also not only limited to that.

be indicated in his other works, Conradie's (2015:63; 2011, 2012) interest and effort in reconstructing Mugambi's soteriology presents a "generic" view of salvation theology. In that, the word 'salvation' embodies many other salvation metaphors as could be found in many other known soteriological theological discussions. Thus, he takes Mugambi's "conversion" theory as a means of salvation further by the wider views he uses to represent it.<sup>53</sup>

As could be understood from the preceding discussion, Conradie's (2015: 64) conversation with Mugambi's soteriology, explains salvation as "a metaphor that may be understood as a rescuing operation from an immediate predicament." Nevertheless, he further admits that the meaning of salvation may be much more than just a rescue operation even though it does not exclude it, yet, it could also be in a multidimensional perspective that addresses various aspects of life. Thus, it becomes necessary to reflect on the questions of salvation theology that have to do with the; what ... from how and who, questions (cf. Conradie 2015:64).

### **3.6.2 Liberation in Mugambi's Soteriology**

In his rigorous discussion of reconstruction of his well-known proposal on soteriology, Mugambi still sees "the need for liberation as fundamental and non-negotiable" (Conradie 2015: 65). Thus, reconstruction is not devoid of liberation and vice versa even though liberation in this sense remains "multifaceted." The interconnection of liberation and salvation is a necessary component that mutually explains and enriches each other, Mugambi (1989a) is understood to creatively utilized the concept of liberation in its multifaceted nature to explain the meaning and spheres of salvation.<sup>54</sup> In its socio-political contexts, especially considering the African settings, liberation is the creative free space in life for the emergence and progress of African theology.

Liberation here refers to multiple processes for societal transformation leading towards political autonomy (from colonial rule), economic freedom (from neo-colonial domination and financial debt).<sup>55</sup> Cultural self-expression (from the legacy of slavery, racism, and

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<sup>53</sup> It could be noted here that Mugambi (2003: 215) used the word "salvation" as an aspect of the above illustrated "types" of salvation theology. That presents us with a sense of conceptual misnomer in that a concept is used to illustrate its meaning. Nevertheless, we shall further investigate to see how that could be creatively reconstructed for better understanding.

<sup>54</sup> He understands and presents salvation theology as 'the ultimate hope of realizing or attaining self-realization and self-fulfilment' (cf. Mugambi 1989: x, Conradie 2015:65).

<sup>55</sup> Mugambi uses the term liberation instead of reconstruction so much in dealing with socio-economic issues which he describes as intrinsic aspects of slavery as the fundamental aspect of economic exploitation and injustice.

Western hegemony) and ecclesial independence (from control by missionaries) (Conradie 2015:65 cf. Mugambi & Magesa 1998).

The psychological aspect of human liberation as the healing of the mind is also crucial to the contributions of Mugambi's soteriology (cf. Conradie 2015: 65).

Furthermore, Mugambi does not neglect the use of liberation for the environment. The interest he places on the well-being of the environment led to the assertion that "the interdependence that exists between human being and nature makes the African take high regard of nature and makes it become part of his existence" (1997:174). Perhaps, Mugambi affirms "we are all without exception, created, just as the animals and the plants... I have to feel a relationship to the tree as my fellow creature<sup>56</sup>" (1997:174). It is his identification with the environment that comes to the concern of how reluctant it is to "take full responsibility for the damages caused to the environment and also to the health of the majority of the world's population" (Mugambi & Vähäkangas, 2001:35). This includes his interest and contribution towards ecological theological liberation as an aspect of human responsibility to the earth<sup>57</sup> (Conradie 2015: 65; Mugambi & Vähäkangas 2001:35). The concern which Mugambi has for the environment calls for what sounds like reconstruction in his theological thoughts, such that he indicates the relevance of the compensation for those nations and peoples who have suffered in the past from these polluting industries by the countries responsible for most damages to the environment (2001).

It is noteworthy in studying Mugambi's soteriology to point out that the resurrection of Christ as the symbol of liberation is "seldom invoked" (Conradie 2015:66) this could probably be because of his much concern on the plight of African people instead of having a deep interest in classical soteriological discussions. Thus suggesting that "African people are to become agents of their liberation" (Conradie 2015:66). In a rational sense, Conradie (2015:66) understands Mugambi's point on the need for the human struggle for their liberation even against evil powers and principalities that are used to manipulate them in the name of God. The

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This gave rise to his emphasis on the need for liberation as a form of reconstruction and salvation (cf. Conradie 2015: 65).

<sup>56</sup> A contrast to Mugambi's identification with the environment rests on the fact that "for centuries, Christianity with Western values has influenced the whole world to look at nature or creation with a negative attitude" (1997:173).

<sup>57</sup> Mugambi & Vähäkangas (2001:35) acknowledge the fact that most damages done to the environment which we live are primarily caused by the affluent nations who constitute less than 20% of the world's population but cause most of the industrial pollution globally.

mystery of God remains the secret act of God in actualizing salvation as liberation from all that dehumanizes humanity (Conradie 2015:66).

The shift from liberation to reconstruction in Mugambi's contributions explains his understanding and the need for the African people to authenticate their lives with their effort regarding applying themselves to "a communal and constructive sense of responsibility" (Conradie 2015:67).<sup>58</sup> Mugambi understands and presents "liberation and reconstruction" as "consecutive and complementary processes" in the renewal of life in a given geographical context or life situation that needs a true sense of freedom, wholeness, and flourishing. Nevertheless, the achievement of liberation always opens the door for the beginning of reconstruction (Conradie 2015: 67 cf. Mugambi 2003: 15ff).

The main differences between liberation and reconstruction are in their nature in that liberation is always "dialectical" and "adversarial" against any system of injustice that dehumanizes. While reconstruction is "cooperative and reciprocal" in nature, in that all willing and liberated people are invited to contribute to the healing of the past wounds and the possibility of a true sense of human flourishing (Mugambi 2003: 166ff, Conradie 2015: 67-68).

The Christian categories of "faith, hope and love" (Conradie 2015:68) are the religious elements in Christian dialectics that inspire and motivate people for reconstruction. Thus reconstruction theology becomes a legitimate aspect of soteriology which holds the potential for the healing of life by reconstructing human "consciousness" towards wholeness. From the perspective of doing the will of God, reconstruction becomes a "spiritual project" that motivates people to do the will of God (Conradie 2015:68). Moreover, from Conradie's (2015:69) understanding of Mugambi, "reconstruction is indeed the key to African salvation." Nevertheless, as human beings and even as Africans, our need for "God's grace and not our human efforts" (Conradie 2015:69) for salvation as liberation and reconstruction is basic to our theological understanding.

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<sup>58</sup> Nevertheless, Conradie (2015:69) cautions against reducing the theological value of the presence of God in reconstruction, thereby making it "our work and our human responsibility." For more on the need for reconstruction theologies in the twenty-first century, African theological discussions see Maluleke (1997:22 cf. Gathogo 2008:161-183).

### 3.6.3 Reconciliation in Mugambi's soteriology

Mugambi's view on reconciliation in its relation to soteriology focuses more on eschatology and socioeconomic situations of life. Thus, he sees liberation as an element that precedes reconciliation in that without the former the latter will not be possible (Conradie 2015:70). Just like liberation in the previous lines, justice is an indispensable element for the possibility of reconciliation (Conradie 2015:70). For it is with no doubt could point us not only to the spiritual aspect of reconciliation between humanity and God but also to the reconciliation between people that have much to do with economic restitution as an act of actualizing reconciliation and reconstructing a life for the better. The need for liberation and justice for reconciliation makes it not to be reduced to what could be called 'cheap reconciliation' (Conradie 2015:70 cf. Conradie 2003).

Mugambi sees the Church as the vital force or agent of and for reconciliation in an ecumenical perspective. He articulates that saying 'the Church is called upon to be an agent of reconciliation and will serve that role effectively if it is itself a reconciled and harmonious community.' (Mugambi 1995:175; Conradie 2015: 71). Which then sees the Church mainly as an agent of "peace and fostering social harmony" (Conradie 2015:71).

In his book *From Liberation to Reconstruction: African Christian Theology after the Cold War* (1995) Jesse Mugambi demonstrates the fact that liberation is in the Bible and African situation a historical reference related to a given period. Thus the quest for understanding salvation/healing and wholeness (Maluleke 1997: 15) is a vital aspect of African biblical hermeneutics. To that end, we turn to situate Mugambi's view of reconciliation and how it relates to seeing salvation as wholeness – a concept which the ongoing study seeks to emphasize.

#### 3.6.3.1 Reconciliation as healing?

Theology of reconstruction is not only suggested as a substitute for liberation but has more to its claims. Some of such claims could come to actualization when African theologians respond and see the relevance therein reconstruction motif and to move toward facilitating the process (Mugambi, 1995:166). As to its significance, the theology of reconstruction is seen to have two roles amongst others which present its contribution and placement in both African theologies and perhaps, Christian theology at large. The authentication of this theological model would

do two things; firstly, require to enhancing the process of reconciliation and confidence building; and secondly, leads to re-orientation and re-training (1995:166).

With the experiences of marginalization during the colonial era, cold war, and apartheid, Africa's self- image has since been negative such that there is no real expectation out of this continent (Mugambi, (2003:59). Such characterization has had to do with the fact that even Christianity, Mugambi says, that is believed to be a social change agent has been diluted with secular foreign policies while dispensing humanitarian assistance (2003:56). Moreover, to reclaim her social roles would include seeking to restore walls that are broken, attending to the plight of the marginalized amongst others. In this case, the theology of reconstruction will demand "re-orientation" (2003:56). Perhaps for this re-orientation to stand, Mugambi suggests that "Africans will have to restore confidence in themselves" ... and to such orientation, he continues, "is an educational task which can be undertaken by Churches more efficiently than by other social institution" (2003:59).

The second role which theology of reconstruction could play that concerns particularly, the ongoing study is that of reconciliation. It is evident to note that, one of the motivations to the Africa's acceptance of Christianity was the fact that many Africans saw it as the most effective agent to help them cope with rapid social transformation<sup>59</sup> (Mugambi, 1995:110; Phiri & Werner, 2013:118). The question begging for an answer now relates to this view is whether or not Christian theology has stood over the years to serving as a transformative social agent<sup>60</sup>? In an attempt to that question, we will infer with Mugambi's emphasis that "African Christian theology in the 21<sup>st</sup> century will be characterized by the themes of social transformation and reconstruction" (1995:40). Emphasis on social reconstruction considerably has less or no priority (Phiri & Werner, 2013:118) while the greater emphasis rests on "securing eternal life for the believers after death" (2013:118), thus forming a sort of dichotomy between religion and social engagement. Mugambi sees such emphasis leading to a different terrain which brings about the abdication of social responsibility with regards to the current political and economic affairs, thus creating a contrast to what he said motivated Africans for Christianity.

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<sup>59</sup> The fact remains that, even today, most African Christians tend to associate themselves with Christianity, not for theoretical reasons, but for the cultural benefits accruing from that association. (Mugambi, 1995:110).

<sup>60</sup> This would give those African Christians who believe to have social transformative freedom confidence to stand as they see to the actualization of these forms of transformation.

For those are factors which ‘burdens people’ such that many Africans turn to the Church for refuge hoping that they might survive the collapse of social institutions which fail to serve them and the postcolonial political crises (Phiri & Werner, 2013:118). With the reverse in these expectations, could result in loss of confidence in the African church so much that the expectations on her to restoring human loss dignity are not actualized. This could expose the Africans in the 21<sup>st</sup> century to the challenges it might not be able to handle because elements leading to desiring reconciliation abound on a daily basis. Which also would extend the quest for salvation from these items to enable a reconciled humanity with themselves, with structures that dehumanized them and with God.

With the birth of reconstruction theology, Mugambi has the vision for having a new and a reconciled Africa that would be ready to face the impending challenges of the post-cold war era (2003:74). However, the challenge in respect to this relates to how Christian theology can appeal to the gospel values and construct a new community with new social relationships” (Mwaura, 2009:26). For it is evident that, though there has been a differential expansion of Christianity in Africa yet it “has not a direct impact on human relations among the people burdened with civil strife, administrative inefficiency, and economic failure” (Phiri & Werner, 2013:118). One of the possible ways of doing that could be through “awareness in social justice, human rights, common good and social responsibility” (2009:26), thus bringing the idea of reconciliation. This reconciliation is a concept that is critical in Mugambi’s work that “should not be a hasty process but one that respects and restores human dignity” (2009:29).

Mugambi does not only consider the significance of reconstruction as it replaces the already known paradigm but also tries to outline its direct import to whatever damage the former had caused. To that end, he realizes that various factors have contributed to the disorientation of the African people which has contributed to the fact that “African ethic has been eroded by both external and internal pressures”<sup>61</sup> (1995:73). The result of the distortions has caused damages relating to the perception of human life and its dignity which has lost respect in most African societies due to the dilution of its ethic. Thus leading to what Mugambi affirms as

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<sup>61</sup> The external pressures Mugambi, 1995:73 says, include the Christian missionary enterprise which has accompanied the secular forces of colonial and neo-colonial expansion. The internal pressures he continues, include the changes in social structure which inevitably befall a society as a consequence of new historical circumstance.



relating to why “Africa’s social consciousness is formed differently”<sup>62</sup> (2003:125) which should be one of the reasons why the call for a rebuild or reconstruction is prominent. Perhaps, with the stance of reconstruction already known – Mugambi alludes, what lies ahead now are efforts to contribute towards building the new society which should be a significant concern to Africans (2003:74). More so that the Africa which he is concern about is the one he has described as the as the emergence of a new society which requires being built on solid foundations to ensure that it has the aim of reconstructing human ideas.

The idea of this new society carries with it the challenge of new ideas, focus, a new conceptual framework of living, and what would constitute the reality of its newness, perhaps its general orientation. Africa in Mugambi’s ‘new world order’ would best be described as a new society in which “all people can participate without being branded with either one ideological label or the other” (1995: xv). The result of which “they can cope with the forces of colonial domination and European imperialism” (Mugambi, (2003:53) which kept them in the box during that era.

The said new society is seeing as that which has experienced healing – a concept which the ongoing study upholds. In this articulation of healing, Mugambi uses Jesus’ approach, which to him is much closer to the traditional African perception than it is, and would be to Western scientific medicine (Mugambi & Magesa, 1989). Mugambi, however, sees health in the teaching of Jesus as “wholeness of life” (1989:156) – a concept which conforms with this study. He describes this ‘wholeness of life’ using an illustration of two scenarios. Firstly, he articulates that someone may be physically well, but spiritually ‘dead. Such situations Mugambi admits that the restoration of health for such a person would require the harmonization of physical wholeness with spiritual wholeness, thus echoing the idea of holistic healing (1989:156). At the other stance, Mugambi sees a condition where “someone may be spiritually strong, but physically weak” (1989:156). In that case, he builds his argument from Jesus’ model where he submits that “spiritual wholeness takes priority over physical health because it provides the religious disposition to facilitate physical healing” (1989:156). The healing comprising of both spiritual and the physical thus carries the notion of harmony within

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<sup>62</sup> One of the reasons for the difference in formulation of Africa's consciousness relates to the fact that "the missionary and colonial enterprises inculcated in African people the attitude that their moral traditions are 'primitive' and 'barbaric', in contrast with those of the missionaries and colonial masters, which have been portrayed as 'civilized' and 'advanced'" (Mugambi, 1997:17).



oneself which to a large extent, speaks of the wholeness of the subject which is involved. Thus reconciling the physical with the spiritual which results in healing of minds.

Taking from Jesus' model, Mugambi (1995:164) asserts, "the mandate from God through Jesus Christ is that, the Christian faith should bring about peace on earth and goodwill amongst humankind." Moreover, from the harm which external and internal factors discussed above have brought to Africa (1997:2), Mugambi discovers that the actualization of the 'peace on earth and goodwill amongst humankind' would require the effort of more than one person. To that end, he says, "the process will require considerable efforts of reconciliation and confidence-building, and also, require re-orientation and re-training" (1995:166). The attainment of these successes would contribute toward reconciling the Africans with themselves, irrespective of what brought about the struggles that call for reconciliation. Hence, seeing this concept of reconciliation with all its tenets as healing which covers both humans and the society they live.

### 3.7 Critiquing Mugambi's Theology of Reconstruction

With the likely hypothesis of Mugambi's theology of construction, it has received critiques from among scholars. These critiques highlighted<sup>63</sup> below, are taken from basically two points of Mugambi's work, namely, "his reconstruction theology and his use of Ezra-Nehemiah in its quests" (Farisani, 2010:513). The first set of critique comes from Maluleke<sup>64</sup> and the second set from Musa Dube<sup>65</sup>.

Maluleke refers to Mugambi as a "passionate and committed African Churchman, theologian and continental patriot of our time" (Gathogo, 2006:2). He, however, began his critique on Mugambi's work saying that "the shape of the reconstruction paradigm and its potential for effectively replacing the inculturation - liberation paradigms remains unclear" (2006:3; cf. Maluleke, 1996c:473). For Mugambi to have the authority or right to propound his theology of reconstruction, Maluleke says that "he needed to take seriously that which he wanted to replace namely, African theologies and their inculturation and liberation paradigms" (Gathogo, 2006:3). Secondly, Mugambi's theological proposition is observed to have offered "a few

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<sup>63</sup> For detailed information on the critique of Mugambi's theology and his usage of the Nehemiah paradigm other than Moses and the Exodus, see *Maluleke and Musa Dube's* works. Here we are only going to make highlights of their critiques.

<sup>64</sup> See most of his works for details.

<sup>65</sup> Also, see most of her works for a detailed argument and critique.

biblical and socio-political justification for his construction paradigm" (2010:513). On a third note, Farisani echoing Maluleke affirms that "Mugambi does not even acknowledge or engage the biblical hermeneutic developed in the liberation paradigm" (2010:513).

Further critique from Musa Dube, a known feminist theologian comes in three dimensions. Firstly, Dube, as reported by Farisani (2010) is critical of Mugambi's call for us to move from liberation to reconstruction theology. Arguing as a postcolonial feminist, Dube does not see liberation and reconstruction as frameworks that should be separated as she does not think that liberation is something that we need to transcend (Faarisani, 2010:513). Secondly, Dube suggests rather that a call from liberation to Reconstruction could have been better entitled, 'No Liberation without Reconstruction.' Alternatively, she argues, it could have been called 'Reconstruction for Liberation.' Thirdly, Dube contends that "Ezra- Nehemiah story is not only a colonizing story, it is also gender oppressive" (2010:513). Taking the third critique further from the feminist perspective, Mwara (2015) begins by appreciating the contribution Mugambi's work brings. She says, "Mugambi's theology has a role in the social transformation of Africa and advocates for a reconstruction theology based on the biblical motif of the return of the exiles and the reconstruction of the lives" (2015:19). However, she outlines the other side of Mugambi's theology as a weakness seeing that his idea does not incorporate a gender perspective and pays little attention to women's concern and role in the reconstruction process (2015:19).

### **3.8 Conclusion**

Mugambi's idea of reconstruction illustrates the wisdom of Jesus of reconstructing relationships not in the bitterness of injuries suffered but rather in befriending and winning love (cf. Magesa 2013:189). Thus, takes the struggle for liberation further and into a dimension that heals the wounds of the past and creates a healthy environment for peaceful co-existence and human flourishing. Thus, Mugambi's (1995) contribution has not only charted a paradigm shift in doing theology in African about its unjust past experiences, but it also opens new thoughts that are relevant to further engagement "to those who hope and work for a flourishing Africa" (Mwase 1997:911).

It is interesting to note that Mugambi's "interest is building up humanity in the world as it is meant to be under God" (Magesa 2013:189). Thus "[i]t involves repairing broken relationships in the community of persons, humanity, and nature, and between humanity and God"

(2013:190). “Mugambi is convinced that it is through the process of social reconstruction for transformation and toward communion that true Christian radicalism lies” (2013:190).

This aspect of soteriology provides a useful answer to the quest of concerned women theologians in African like Oduyoye. Our discussion of her quest has much to do with the active sensitization of the plight of women in Africa that are dehumanizing them due to inappropriate African cultural and even colonially imposed identity perspectives. Thus, he gives the clarion call that something urgent, definite, and useful requires taking into consideration about such unhealthy situations. Such is a great call for the holistic realization of salvation that holds the potential for the flourishing of life. Mugambi’s contributions, in particular on the need to move into an active sense of reconstruction beyond gaining liberation, bring the course to a true sense of relevance. In which past wounds get healed, and the healing effect of salvation brings different people together in communion that creates safe spaces for human dignity and the flourishing of life and the environment. This aspect of salvation as healing, liberation, reconciliation, and reconstruction are useful metaphors for African theologians and the public to use in correcting the cryptic ills of society like the pointless dehumanization that is rampant on the continent of Africa in the name of God. A notable aspect of such unfortunate development is in practice in many prosperity gospel preachers and followers. In that human beings exploit people in the name of God, thus using the Bible and Christian rhetoric in deceptive ways that hinder flourishing and the need for true liberation, and the reconstruction of life for the better.

## Chapter 4: Mercy Oduyoye's Soteriological Analysis

### 4.1 Her Background

Mercy Amba Ewudziwa Oduyoye (1934-) is a Ghanaian Methodist<sup>66</sup> Theologian who is known for her involvement and constructive contributions to various African and world organizations.<sup>67</sup> One of her distinctive contributions to African theology led to envisioning the need to establish a forum called 'The Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians'<sup>68</sup> (Phiri & Nadar, 2006:2; Kennedy, 2010:288). Her research interest has covered widely in areas of culture, religion, women (Oduyoye, 2007:1) looking as these areas are of high concern in the African continent, thus suggesting her familiarity with contextual relevance. Her research interest particularly focuses on women who from experience herself, desires to see them living out their God-given potentials and living dignified lives. Her esteem interest in the healthy lives of women possibly contributed to the establishment of the circle of concerned African women theologians. A circle with one of the focuses as to "consider ways of identifying areas in which the life of the African woman in contemporary times still lacks in recognition of full human worth and dignity" (Oduyoye & Kanyoro, 2001:118).

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<sup>66</sup> Mercy Oduyoye was born on her paternal grandfather's cocoa farm in Amoana, a region which lies in the Eastern province of Ghana (Kennedy, 2010:285), and of Akan parentage in a matrilineal society, and married into the patriarchal-patrilineal Yoruba of western Nigeria (Oduyoye, 2002:71). Eight days after her birth, she was given the name of Amba Ewudziwa (Kennedy, 2010:285). Her four names come from three people: 'Mercy' is the name of her mother; 'Ámba Ewudziwa' which she takes from her paternal grandfather; and Oduyoye is the name of her husband (Kennedy, 2010:286). She is the eldest of nine children and born into a matrilineal culture, which is mother-centred, her identity and those of all her brothers and sisters depended on who their mother was (Kennedy, 2010:286). She like father, was a teacher before proceeded to study theology at the Universities of Ghana and Cambridge (Kennedy, 2010:287), where at Cambridge she learned under these theologians, namely; Alec Vidler and Maurice Wiles, amongst others (Kennedy, 2010:287). While at Cambridge she joined the Student Christian Movement (SCM), and from her involvement with SCM, she met her Nigerian husband, Modupe Oduyoye (2010:287).

<sup>67</sup> Some of which include, the All African Conference of Churches; the World Student Christian Federation, where she served as its president. She has also been in active involvement with the Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians, where she has acted as the president, the deputy general secretary of the World Council of Churches (WCC) (Oduyoye, 1999:88; Kennedy, (2010:287-288).

<sup>68</sup> Mercy Oduyoye, a vision she got from attending one of the world conferences, established the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians in 1989.

## 4.2 Her Influence

Mercy Oduyoye is described variously at different spheres, including “a pioneering and a wise African woman theologian,” “one of the first African women theologians to write and publish theological reflections of any significance.” “The great African storyteller,” “Mother of African theologies” (Phiri & Nadar, 2006: xvii, 2, 10). A “pioneer of African women’s theology” (Brand, 2002:160), “a virtuoso at formulating unforgettable telling aphorisms, proverbs, sayings and quips” (Kennedy, 2010:284), “a leader in the ecumenical movement” (Nadia, 2015:1).

When we survey through her works, it is glaring to see that “instead of belligerence, she has devoted her life and labors to the overthrow of oppression, where she voices her views with wisdom and wit” (Kennedy, 2010:284). Such passion is taken further through her efforts to ensuring “helping to liberate women from the asymmetrical control exercised by men” (2010:289). As it is to her, part of the cultural charming of women is “the expectation that women should not resist motherhood and childbearing, and such expectations can breed cultural sexism...Where women are highly held in subjugation to the needs of men, while men are free and mobile” (2010:290). It implies that her theological inquiry centers on creating a breathing space for women in African traditional cultures, where significant, cultural requirements that dehumanizes them are oppressive. Perhaps, it is worth noting that despite her esteem concern for women’s well-being she does not limit it to women alone, but extends such concerned vision to men as well. This conforms with one of the focal points in feminist theories, where the quest for well-being gears toward achieving the ‘humanness’ in its entirety (Jones, 2000).

## 4.3 African Women’s Theology

### 4.3.1 Positioning Oduyoye’s Theology within African Women’s Theology

As a Methodist, Oduyoye holds the Bible in high regard and articulates her theology based on a contentment with the Bible and traditional creeds (Kennedy, 2010:288). Her theology, though writing from a traditional base, does not imply that “she is intellectually timorous” instead, that she can “sting and stimulate with her comments” (2010:288). Thus, from such backgrounds of writing, she is convinced to say,

Theologians throughout the world who felt a call to speak more relevantly to their age and generation freed themselves from traditional dogmatic and systematic theology and focus on life issues. Instead of telling people what questions to ask and then furnishing them with the answers, theologians began to listen to the questions people were asking and then seek the answers” (Oduyoye, 1986a:3).

Theology for Oduyoye manifests “wherever people reflect on their life situation in the context of the gospel” (Oduyoye, 1986a:2). That kind of theology she argues is “doing theology from the context of injustice and unrighteousness” (1986a:2), otherwise referred to as “contextual theology” (1986a:2). From her context, Africa and Ghana to be precise, that are all situated in what she classifies as a third world, and her understanding of the context, gives her the enthusiasm to associate her findings among the third world theologians. She does that based on the fact that, third world theologians do theology “from the context of injustice and unrighteousness” (Oduyoye, 1986a:2), which is also a familiar norm in her context. This kind of theological inquiry makes Oduyoye affirm that “there is no justification for demanding one uniform system of theology throughout the Christian community, but that theology reflects an awareness of the horizon toward which all believers move” (1986a: vii).

Her understanding of the realities in different communities with different experiences to life issues enables her to call for various approaches to situations, as such results to the saying that “theology is functional” (Oduyoye & Kanyoro, 1992:40). The functionality of this theology, Oduyoye affirms, “can contribute more to the development of theology in Africa, the ministry of the church ecumenically as well as in our local churches, and contribute to human development in Africa” (1990:41). In other words, it is a theology that fosters growth, unity, and development, where the adherents feel its impact. Thus, imply that theology that is functional would go a long way to understanding different situations and lived experiences of humanity, and as such, becomes relevant to their contexts.

Oduyoye writes as a feminist theologian of liberation (Kennedy, 2010:288) and as such, has four principal concerns.<sup>69</sup> These four themes “she strings them together like beads in a unified necklace” (2010:288), thus forming what she calls a “comprehensive discourse about God and Jesus and human cravings for liberation and escape from suffering” (2010:289). As a feminist theologian of liberation, she says, “theology of liberation honed for the needs, depredations,

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<sup>69</sup> First, captivity and oppression as they have been experienced in Africa for centuries; second, the situation and suffering of women in Africa; third, ecumenism; and fourth, theological issues of relevance internationally, discussed from African vantage point (Kennedy, 2010:288).

sicknesses, and cries of Africa” (2010:284). Such an experience which she sees in practice since “the independence movements that African countries struggled to extricate themselves from the entanglements of colonial rule” (Oduyoye, 1986a:2). Such quests for liberation although began in Latin America (cf. Gutierrez, 1993), yet, Oduyoye holds that “liberation theology is not peculiar to Latin America” (1986a:3) because Africa also struggled, and are still struggling for liberation as well.

In her work, Oduyoye specifies two forms of oppression in Africa that frequently call for liberation. These she says is “colonial domination of Africans and the patriarchal subjugation of African women” (Kennedy, 2010:289) and as such, “struggles to undue colonial and male dominance inspires her theology” (Kennedy, 2010:289). However, “Women who do feminist theology have called the attention of the Christian religious world to its God language. Such as sexist, patriarchal, hierarchical, domineering and alienating- which excludes women from the image of God, by making God in the image of the human male” (Oduyoye & Kanyoro, 1992:44). Thus, affirms a demand for liberation that focuses from patriarchal subjugation, as Oduyoye affirms, “Our work is framed by ideology and concern for the liberation of women, and yet, we struggle to find ways in which to name what we do” (1986a:5).

In other to name and situate what these liberation theologians admit, it suffices that their identity is recognizable through a proper description as that could free them from what others easily describe them namely; as Feminists theologians. On the other hand, Oduyoye opines, “we do not want to be called feminists because of its seeming neglect of race and class” (1986a:5), and instead, opts that as “third world theologians... Who study the socioeconomic, political and religious - cultural realities of their context, seeking specifically to understand the woman’s experiences of God” (Oduyoye & Kanyoro, 1992:45).

Further, unlike third world men and Western Christian feminists, African women distinct themselves through a methodological reading of the Bible. They chose rather to “struggle with re-reading of the Bible from their perspective as the oppressed, marginalized and as persons who have been rendered invisible by the dominant culture or classical theological structures” (Oduyoye, 1990:45). Thus defining a religious motive of African women’s theologies, which is in their efforts to liberate those under cultural and any other form of oppression.

#### 4.3.2 Some features of African Women's' Theology

African women theologians though are familiar with African women's experiences, yet, do not claim to develop a theology that is exclusively for women. Instead, a focus on the following; "the growth of wider ecumenism, the recognition of the integrity of humans, and the struggle for the wholeness of the earth" (Oduyoye, 1989:194). Such is in close agreement to what Oduyoye has described elsewhere while relating African women's quest for liberation with God's action on, and toward human well-being. She notes, "God continually calls us back to the paths of justice, compassion, and humility" (1989:195), so much so we could seek the well-being of others as he does for the whole humanity. To this end, Oduyoye opines further that as Christians, both "women and men are empowered by Christ to breach our broken relationships and transform our human community to become a family of God" (1989:195).

These efforts of African women theologians on inculcating the well-being of the whole of Africans, and women, in particular, could only be operative when certain connotations often associated with the women are changed. For instance, in an Africa that sees women as "unfinished handiwork of God, and so are children" (Fabella & Oduyoye, 1989:4), would be difficult to accept the movement towards wholeness, which African women anticipate. Such articulations to women's position in African societies, however, have resulted to why African women seem to assume that "the likeness of God in women is neglected" (1989:4). Such affirmations African women have realized those promoted and justified by the biblical creation story (1989:4) from where man is said to be the head of a woman.

Consequently, having all heads together, and empowered by same Christ, could be of great significance to breach the brokenness of relationships. Such declarations would not have regards if, within Christian theology in Africa as elsewhere, there is still a disparity as to the view of individuals. There would, however, be a call to turning to an often acclaimed fact in Christian theology that "in Christ, there is neither male nor female; neither Jew nor Greek" (Fabella & Oduyoye, 1989:4). Otherwise, women would "continue to be grouped with children" (1989:4) as such is prominent in most African societies<sup>70</sup>.

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<sup>70</sup>, For instance, children in most societies are often considered as those without a word of their own other than what they are instructed to do or say, so are women equated. Such would lead to the impossibility of both male and female coming together for the same purpose of building the broken walls of relationship calling for fixing.



However, despite the distinctions in ideas within African Christian theology, it has not resulted in any form of silence within the circle of African women as African women doing theology have not quit. Hence, they have remained dedicated to having a theology that would “bring us in Africa closer to the quality of life of God’s children” (Oduyoye, 1989:195). In addition to their dedication, they commit and further dedicate themselves that such theology they claim to build would be a “theology that seeks to sustain life in Africa” (1989:195). For such theology, they would endeavor to reflect a concern for “global justice” (1989:195), and at the same time “provides African people with a spirituality by which to struggle for this justice” (1989:195).

Furthermore, the pursuit of African women’s theology to bring to terms and be in conversation with their male counterparts still grows, such that they have come up with a theology which Oduyoye calls “a vital theology” (Oduyoye, 1989:195). Such theology she says has dual functions namely; to grip the variation of articulations or to encourage the continuity of struggles the African continent battles with (Oduyoye, 1989). However, in the context where their effort is gearing towards enhancing a harmonious community and well-being is the goal, this vital theology would serve the first function above, namely; to grip the variation in articulations of ideas, thus making constructive dialogue between women theologians and their male counterparts. This vital theology, Oduyoye declares, is “full of life” (1989:195) as such could go separate ways in efforts of enhancing liberation of women. That she says, “will animate the struggles against racism, economic domination, political instability and militarization” (1989:195). Hence, would result to what “gives life to movements that combat the dehumanization and disrapture of creation caused by human beings” (1989:195).

#### **4.3.3 Experiences within the Traditional Norms**

Apart from being the custodians of both culture and religion in Africa, men also predominate in areas of research, and virtually in most academic disciplines. Such prominence that African men exhibit over different spheres of life results to the exclusion of participation, notably by women. As such, these often-excluded set of people has gotten into yearnings for liberation from such situations to where they could experience the feeling of inclusion and feeling the sense of acceptability. Seeing this, and what it has caused them to face, African women have resolved to say, We will continue to be spoken of as if we were dead if men continue to pilot the affairs in Africa and women are not incorporated (Oduyoye & Kanyoro, 1990:1).

One of the experiences that men's dominance over affairs that African women face relates to "women's experience of being persons primarily about others" (Oduyoye, 1986a:122), which they see predominates in Africa. Such are articulations in instances where the wholeness of women is in connection to her biological statuses namely, her ability to procreate, whose mother she might be, and whose wife is she. For if those mentioned above are absent in an African woman, she receives treatment with utter disrespect, thus seen as a half human being. Such assertions Oduyoye says hinders the eyes of African cultures from seeing the uniqueness and giftedness a woman might have since her worth depends on her social and biological attachments. Thus, she affirms that "African women are undeniable that they are dominated by the role of mother or wife" (1995c:184) provided that biological attachments continue to be the yardstick for measuring their worth.

It is further taken in an instance where an African woman's inability to procreate though married, as it is a requirement in many African traditions and cultures. To this end, "a childless wife would be blamed, irrespective of the fact that her husband may be sterile or that she may be facing some health hazards" (Oduyoye & Kanyoro, 1992:142). Thus, have resulted to why women make certain assertions toward life, as they see their wholeness and chances of acceptance relying on, and are regulated by men through their biological productivity. Hence, while women are lamenting on why their well-being depends on what they can do namely, to produce children, it makes them see "as if their being is to ensure that human life is reproduced and nurtured" (1992:17). While articulating this, they are at the same time commenting on the close tied to their natural fruitfulness as a determinant to their well-being. Consequently, this has resulted into why many women had the feeling of regret to have been born women and wished "they were men instead of women" (1992:112). It, however, does not depict that being male is most preferred to being a woman, but the pressures on them have motivated such wishes. On the contrary, even at instances where women can meet up with the said requirements for acceptance, it does not guarantee their freedom either, from various forms of oppression by the men. Thus, we could articulate that attitude enhancing oppression of women focuses toward 'attacking the humanity of women' and not due to their inability to meeting up intending demands.

In addition to the experiences on personality and productivity, comes the second experience namely, "the religious role of women" (Oduyoye, 1986a:123). Since African women made up part of the traditional African societies and allied to its practices, yet, there are restrictions as

to which women engage in practices of religious rites in Africa. For instance, Africa has many cults, says Oduyoye, from which women are sometimes, and even girls are restricted from partaking. In fact, some religious practices women do not allow insights on how such practices not even how to perform them (1986a:123). However, those areas of religious practices of which women do not have access to, yet, boys because they are males have the permissions and to also partake in the religious rituals.

The cultural rites through which the degradation of another part of humanity, namely; women, is enhanced is in active practice in different spheres of life in Africa even in the religious rites. For despite the assertion that Africa is notoriously religious (Mbiti, 1969:1), yet, the religiosity of Africans has not enabled them to counteract cultural practices that are life-denying. Even with the declaration in the Christ of Christians, who is the incarnate Word of God as “the restorer of all cultures from brokenness and disintegration to wholeness and integration” (Oduyoye & Kanyoro, 1992:41). Amongst the adherents of such beliefs, they equally contribute to promoting the culture and its negative influences, some of which threatens human life.

#### **4.3.4 Commitment to Grassroots Women**

One of the features of African women’s theologies is in “their commitment to grassroots women living in faith communities” (Phiri & Nadar, 2006:6). Such commitments look toward attending to challenges and concerns these grassroots women yearn for liberation. For it has become a point of concern seeing what grassroots women combat with in the societies they live. As such, African women theologians have reached a consensus that “African women have named the challenges facing Africans and have gathered the courage to address them in ways that are healing, transforming and life-giving” (2006:60). Such efforts aim at reclaiming the notion that “Africa is very hospitable” (Oduyoye & Kanyoro, 1992:9). So, this they do to make their intended audience (the grassroots women) have a taste of such claims by their way of presenting “what is deemed to be beneficial to the well-being of the whole community” (1992:10).

The desires of African women’s theologians, therefore, arises because the grassroots women have been objects of cultural and traditional violence of a different sort, which denies them their supposed respect and honor as full humans. On this, Oduyoye notes that “culture of compliance and honor for the humanity of women can only develop as we dispassionately

review the tradition that has been handed to us and what we would like to be” (Oduyoye, 2007:2). Moreover, to achieve this, she says, “we need to develop a culture based on aspects of religion that have zero tolerance for violence, especially against women and children” (2007:8). The sole aim of this inquiry is such that “when women approach the theological enterprise from their hurts, joys, and spirituality, they could come to an appreciation of the Christ that is more relational than has been expressed in traditional western theology” (Oduyoye & Kanyoro, 1992:46).

#### **4.3.5 Commitment to making Solidarity with Men Theologians**

Another aspect of African women’s theology worth paying attention involves the realization that, this theological inquiry is not aiming at injecting a crisis between them and their male counterparts. As such, they clarify, “women theologians in Africa are not launching a separatist movement, neither is the proclamation of the humanity of women heresy... Rather...A protest against exclusion and marginalization” (Oduyoye & Kanyoro, 2001:42). In a way, this makes them opt for a “two-winged theology” (2001:43) to enable them to give a sense of correlation with male theologians. Thus, admitting that “all of us, women and men, have to observe, analyzed, think and create liberating alternatives” (2001:43). For they have realized that the battle cannot be won by one party, thus affirming they are not- isolation with the African male theologians. Furthermore, Oduyoye declares, “we are part of a world movement of women who feel the need to stand together as women to ensure that women and women’s concerns are not marginalized but become human concerns” (2001:44). Thus, becomes a concern which every theologian would expect to uphold as it gears toward presenting humanity in its ‘whole.’

#### **4.3.6 Cultural Hermeneutics**

An additional feature of African women’s theology is their categorizations of interpretations, otherwise called hermeneutics in Christian theology. In their discourses, “they recognize the need for race and class to be an integral part of the discourse surrounding gender, rather than as marginal or adjunct discourses” (Phiri & Nadar, 2006:4). Moreover, seeing that these involving culture, and that their concern to addressing cultural and traditional violence, thus, they situated and settled at cultural hermeneutics. Also, by widening their scope to include political and economic changes which form part of the culture, enables Oduyoye to say “we are duty-bound to call attention to the theological roots of the Christian role in humanization and the struggle for peace and justice” (1986a:9). These she calls “universal issues” (1986a:9).

These cultural hermeneutics enables Africans and women “to view the Bible through African eyes and to distinguish and extract from it what is liberating” (Oduyoye, 2001a:11). Also, it is due to such realization that Oduyoye declares why “not everything in culture is liberating” (2001:12), which contrasts with what the Bible, though written and depicts other people’s culture seems to present. For the Christian, Bible opts to present to Africans and women to accept all they read and apply it irrespective of the cultural gap between the original audience and the contemporary readers. However, this realization is probably due to the familiarity with what African-male dominated culture does, which makes Oduyoye say, “my interpretation of the Bible is unacceptable if it harms women, the vulnerable and the voiceless” (2001:12). Because of the lived experiences of African culture, and the incorporation of the Christian gospel and its interpretations, it has contributed in subjugating other members of the society, including women.

Conversely, the integration of Christian gospel message as presented by the westerners makes concerted effort to westernize Africa, which to them could enable the liberation of Africans. Nevertheless, in their quest for liberation, African women theologians suggest, “we must operate from the standpoint that westernizing Africa is not our road to liberation” (Oduyoye & Kanyoro, 2001:53). For a variety of cultures also determine the application of any message especially the one which requires and submits that, ‘different sets of human beings though created in the image of God, yet, are not to be treated equally with others, either due to class or race or gender differential. However, this does not mean to say, African women deny African culture *per se*, for they say, “we have declared our critical solidarity with African religious culture” (Phiri & Nadar, 2006:8). Hitherto, that does not stop them from saying, “while remaining true to our African roots, we have never ceased, through the telling of our stories, to point out those aspects of culture and religion that demonize and oppresses women” (Phiri & Nadar, 2006:8).

#### **4.4 Oduyoye and Salvation**

Oduyoye’s familiarity with her context enables her to suggest the nature of theology that is relevant to Africans, which she says, “a theology that must speak of salvation” (1986b:244; Ngong, 2010:3). She observes this because “Africa is currently a continent where people fight long, bloody wars to resist Islamization or the hegemony of dominant ethnic groups” (Oduyoye, 1996a:494) which to her, the cessation of such challenges is paramount. In such a society she notes, what people yearn for is “Good news (salvation) that empowers people to

reach the shalom that God wills for humanity” (1996a:499). Thus, results to the articulation that “the theme of salvation is so prominent in African religions” (Oduyoye, 1986b:245), and “the heart of African theology” (Brand, 2002:28).

Oduyoye’s concern for the liberation of women leads to the emphasis that “it is important to relate the liberation work of Christ to the specific and particular contexts of African women” (Oduyoye & Kanyoro, 2001:225). Because of such concerns, she objects the claims of Christian gospel on what it calls salvation or liberation, so much, so she describes it as a “myth in Christian circles that the church brought liberty to the Africans” (1995b:479). Such claims which the gospel speaks of salvation for African women argues Oduyoye, “is not gospel enough unless it tries to change the oppressive structures that give them such poor self-image” (Kanyoro & Njorge, 1996:77). On the contrary, the gospel (good news) which speaks of salvation has a unique description in Oduyoye's thoughts. She sees salvation as it entails "honoring the human rights of the other, in promoting the dignity of self and other, in promoting justice and the emancipation of women, marginalized ethnic groups, and the environment" (Oduyoye & Vroom, 2003:43).

For Oduyoye, “our salvation theology has to feature the questions of racism and liberation from material need” (1986b:246) and to “emphasize the need for a communal decision as against totalitarianism” (1986b:246). That would mean in her assertions that, such theology “will enable Africans to become more conscious of the fact that life is lived in the presence of God and full view.... that is in constant communion with our decision of life” (Oduyoye, 1996b:501). That she further explains, would include a kind of salvation that seeks “racial and ethnic justice and gender equality, which promotes a society that human beings are treated not just civilly but caringly with the honor due beings made in the image of God” (1996b:502). Such understanding of salvation presents the overarching needs which Africans and women who are Oduyoye’s sole focus yearn to have.

#### **4.4.1 Salvation as availability to all of life**

In another sense, Oduyoye sees salvation regarding the “availability for all of life – sustaining environment as what all Africa expect” (1996b:499). Equating salvation as such for Oduyoye goes beyond spiritualizing its understanding as often seen as ‘salvation from sin,’ but goes further to relating it to liberation from lived experiences. Such experiences as they involve aspects that affect the well-being of African women namely; hate, injustice, denial of access to

wellness, to mention but a few. On the contrary, Oduyoye sees aspects including “peace, justice, water, and a hug filled with love” (1996b:499) as elements worth admonishing and experiencing by individuals and the whole of African societies. However, in instances where such features are not prominent, would simply calling for deliverance from whatever the cause might be.

Furthermore, a look at the above features whose absence could call for salvation relates to what Oduyoye says, “a theology divorced from ethical demands would have little relevance in Africa” (2002a:16). For ethical demands involves those aspects which when put together, would result in what is known as a life in a condition where life is made better for someone by another person else (Lovin, 2002:10). Equating such to Africa and women would result in a call for liberation because of life-denying forces that are prominent in Africa. These lived experiences which Oduyoye observed would lead to a call for salvation relevant to Africa, as they yearn for liberation. As such, she employs a biblical event as a metaphor to equate African quest for salvation, seeing that, the two stories both involve the need for salvation beyond the often-spiritualized understanding. Thus, the Exodus metaphor which tells the story of the liberation of Israelites from Egypt.

Oduyoye illustrates the story of African salvation with the Exodus story with two reasons in mind. Firstly she says, it is in harmony with my experience, and secondly, it is the deliverance from Egypt that made possible the whole Hebrew experience as people who were God’s special creation (Oduyoye, 1986a:79; 2002a:2). The exodus of Israelites she signifies “was going out of Egypt through God’s mighty power” (2002a:5) while for Africa, it is a cry for liberation from “imposed leadership and colonial officers” (2002a:5). Such comparisons in the above two experiences, and the African experience results to what Oduyoye says the exodus for Africa “is to get out of all these” (2002a:5). Getting out of those experiences would enable Africans to live lives worth fulfilling to attain what Oduyoye describes as “begin to experience the good news of salvation in the here and now” (Oduyoye & Vroom, 2003:43). She, however, compares the African people’s experience with what she calls their exodus with the Israelites’ experience, who Oduyoye also says were liberated “to get on the road to fulfillment” (Oduyoye, 2002a:9).

Oduyoye further outlines the significance of the Exodus event for the Israelites which she says was to make them aware that “their destiny was to be servants of Yahweh, not of Pharaoh” (1986a:84). Such could get them understood the liberating activity as the “outcome of the nature of God as a caring God” (1986a:80). On the other hand, while lamenting on the African



women, Oduyoye refers to the product of their liberation as that which results to “full of life” (1989:195). As such make African women realize salvation as “liberation of Yahweh to all who call upon him” (1986a:100), so that “they can fully express their humanity” (Oduyoye, 1995b:480).

Consequently, African women also understand this salvation as that which will “animate the struggles against racism, economic domination, political instability and militarization” (1989:195), and from other factors that dehumanize them. Some of these dehumanizing factors which refer to “dynamic forces, both personal and social that diminish or deny the flourishing of women” (Jones, 2000:71).

#### **4.4.2 Some Features of Salvation**

##### **4.4.2.1 Salvation as ‘saved from.’**

Nevertheless, Oduyoye’s soteriological discourses are observed to have two features namely, what one is saved *from* and what one is saved *for*. Seeing from her context, and women her focal point, it gives her the motivation for findings regarding what salvation entails for one should there should be any. Taking her search from the Exodus experience of the Israelites, Oduyoye does not only see salvation as limited to “redemption from sin” (2002a:4) as often spiritualized but through different lenses. For the spiritualized salvation sees redemption as exclusively from sin which one has committed but places less or no emphases on the ‘sin against’ which portray such a one (sinner) as solely the one in need of salvation exclusively and not likewise. Yes, in the spiritualized portrayal of salvation that takes prominence, but in a holistic perspective that this study investigates, it involves other facets of life calling for salvation and not exclusively the one considered the sinner.

However, in articulating salvation in ways other than the spiritualized notion and be holding into the Israelites’ exodus experience, findings by various scholars have been made. Some of which showed that “the Israelites are not portrayed as sinners at the beginning of the exodus drama; rather, as ones sinned against; ones endangered, and so God saved them with mighty acts” (Mbiti, 1986:158). Thus, suffice to see salvation as not exclusively for one who sins, but as in the case of Israelites such salvation, however, could be “physical salvation” (1986:158). However, it also affirms the fact that man is both ‘physical and spiritual’ so requires that salvation embrace both (1986:159). For when only one side of the coin takes precedence at the



expense of the other, it will result in a situation where “one part of man is virtually excluded and starved out” (1986:159).

Consequently, liberation for Oduyoye has to do with “both spiritual and material struggles” (2002a:19) a concept which she says “prompted people to adopt Christianity” (2002a:19). That goes to the conception that the “theme of salvation has been made almost synonymous with the gospel through evangelism” (Mbiti, 1980:121). Such submissions have stressed the possibility that “we cannot omit to mention that the notion of salvation in African Christianity addresses itself from the socio – political environment in contemporary Africa” (1986:163). However, looking through the various entanglements which Africans have had to battle with, and are still battling, would provide us with the motivation and affirmation to seeing salvation in multidimensional ways.

The Exodus story serves to indicate that salvation “is not so ample personal as it is political” (Oduyoye, 2002a:19) and by extension, “salvation has to be taken on cosmic dimensions, for it is not enough to limit it to the individual” Mbiti, 1986:165). Perhaps if salvation is limited to affecting an individual only it ends up being “a private affair only” (Mbiti, 1986:165) which might not take other sectors such as cosmic, and political for instance, into consideration. However, salvation beyond the individual level as in the case of Israelites could lead to the acknowledgment which makes “liberating Israel from slavery in Egypt a salvific act born out of God grace” (Oduyoye, 2002a:22). Thus, sees deliverance from that which oppresses and alienates one from freedom among African women says Oduyoye, as that which “make all of us seekers after salvation” (2002a:19).

Oduyoye is also not ignorant of the reality and existence of evil powers in Africa, which also contribute to instances where individuals could live under the positive control of some powers. She emphasizes this knowing that “African peoples are much aware of evil in the world” (Mbiti, 1969:204), so much so that “in various ways, they endeavor to fight it” (1969:204) for purposes of liberation. Such realities results to why Oduyoye says, “Salvation is to be salvation from evil, both individual and structural” (1986b:246), because the factors requiring salvation have been established, namely; the activities of evil deteriorating the lives of Africans. Thus, Oduyoye says “whatever threatens human survival is feared, it is evil and is to be abhorred and exorcized” (Oduyoye, 2001b:32). These she calls “negation of community and attacks on life” (2001a:32), thus describes it as “evil” (2001a:32). Such results to the articulation that these evil

being referred to here, “undermine the worthiness of the source – being, the sacredness of life and the dignity of the human being” (2001b:32).

Oduyoye also refers to this reality of evil and the experiences of African women, in which she says, “evil manifests itself in witchcraft, the aberrations of life and attacks on what makes for well – being” (2001b:32). Thus, requiring that Africans who are familiar with life threats and women as stated earlier would desire liberation. Such articulations as often observed are due to the hierarchical order that is in operation between men and females within African societies. To this end, Oduyoye has the enablement to say “standing still when everything around you is changing is no longer considered brave or virtuous” (1996:495). Thus, implies to Oduyoye that, it is crucial to have a better understanding of what is evil in Africa because evil has been established here as ‘anything that threatens life fulfillment irrespective of the form it takes.’

It is crucial to note from above that elements are comprising what one needs salvation or deliverance from, are many. However, it is a form of newness in which a particular inner change occurs as a kind of proof of salvation thus, places such a one in a different realm. Such could indicate what one becomes after their redemption as Oduyoye suggests “to live as God’s image bearers with dignity” (2001a:32). Thus, gives us an idea of what becomes of one who experiences salvation from whatever form, especially concerning the ongoing study that is reconceptualising salvation as healing. We then turn to Oduyoye’s second feature of salvation.

#### 4.4.2.2 Salvation as ‘saved for.’

The second important aspect of Oduyoye’s salvation involves not only a liberation ‘*from*’ as seen above, but also the anticipated aim seen in what one is saved ‘*for*’. Oduyoye sees this when she delves into what ought to be one’s quest *for* salvation, thus relates it to the interest God is having on humanity. She expounds that, the God who saves also has interest to “restore life where death threatens to take over” (Oduyoye, 2002a:46) for this she declares that, this same God “seeks the well-being of the other” (2002a:46). As such, God saves people “for the well-being and human dignity of all people” (Marais, 2015b:12).

Furthermore, while Oduyoye articulates that our salvation is undeserved (2002a:23), she argues that God’s purpose for liberation entail “the plan of God to make us truly human” (2002a:23). Oduyoye attests that it would enable a saved person or community to “live rightly...While putting things rightly” (Oduyoye, 2001b:33) and this enables women “to be at peace and fully

integrate into their communities” (2001b:33). Thus, live as saved people who do not only assume to be saved but feel the essence of the salvation through the life they live.

Oduyoye also acknowledges what one is saved *for*, as the feeling of a new experience, such a person or people enjoy. For salvation, she argues, “is related to a new beginning of a new life and the full experience of the reign of God” (2001b:54). Such new experience she explains that:

The least in any cultural setting find empowerment to wriggle out from under the heavy foot of the powerful oppressor. When battered women can say enough is enough; when women no longer submit their wages to husbands who spend them on extra- marital affairs (Oduyoye & Vroom, 2003:43).

It is then, Oduyoye declares further “we begin to experience the good news of salvation” (2003:43), and this good news for Oduyoye is “whatever builds bridges between the particular identities of Africa’s diverse and often warring peoples” (2003:44). As such, a new experience of life which Oduyoye sees as liberation from “oppressive forces, be they natural and political, sociological and religious” (Oduyoye, 2001b:54) emerges. Such attainment, however, is experienced “when the human being reaches fulfillment or achieves the purpose of her creation.... she simultaneously achieves salvation” (Clark, 2010:155).

## **4.5 Salvation as Wholeness**

### **4.5.1 Features Relating to Salvation as Wholeness**

Oduyoye’s soteriological analysis which this study holds, has, as seen above, geared toward establishing an understanding of salvation beyond the often-spiritualized interpretation, namely; to be saved from sin, but goes beyond that. Her understanding of salvation, however, has resulted to viewing different facets of life threats hindering the flourishing of humanity, which to her, makes up what needs liberation. As such, her elaboration of wholeness becomes an important pointer to investigating salvation as wholeness.

In African Christian theology, which is also a familiar context for Oduyoye, salvation is “conceived in holistic terms by most African Christian theologians” (Brand, 2002:109). The idea of this wholeness, however, denotes that “different areas of life, like the religious and the secular, or the spiritual and physical, can never be compartmentalized and understood in isolation from one another” (Brand, 2002:103). In other words, put, would mean that “the whole is greater than the sum of the parts” (Potter, 1981:298). Thus, suggests an understanding

of salvation without dichotomizing the various segments of life, for example between sacred and secular, to enable an attainment to holistic understanding.

#### 4.5.2 Wholeness as Healing of Broken Relationship

The comprehensive view of salvation could be “the healing of the wounds wrought by the estrangement...The establishment of communion where previously there had been the alienation .....the transformation of something broken into something whole” (Potter, 1981:298). Such portrays an aspect, which does not receive careful attention in Christian theology as in need of salvation, seeing how the most emphases on salvation have solely been on salvation from sin. Yes, sin as one of the aspects, in fact, the major area of which humanity require salvation from, but the then better clarity of what it entails would help especially this study to articulate its vastness to different aspects of life. Some of which include, broken relationships, which have resulted to alienation among human relationships are capable of forming a sense of separateness, thus make up elements calling for salvation. The salvation, however, needed in such situation Oduyoye sees as that which leads to “humanization, social improvement, cultural renewal, cosmic transformation and (re)vitalization” (Brand, 2002:109).

In Oduyoye’s soteriological discourse, however, the concept of wholeness is paramount. Thus she articulates that, the wholeness of a being involves reaching a life where one is “fully integrated into the community” (Oduyoye, 1986b:243), and is “accepted in the community of the living” (Kato, 1975:42). For Oduyoye, “the sense of wholeness is manifested in the African attitude to life” (1986b:242). Implying that “no separation between the sacred and the secular in the communal life” (1986b:242), neither there is “a separation between the soul and the body in person” (1986b:242). Moreover, for Oduyoye, a holistic view of salvation entails that, “spiritual needs are as important for the body as bodily needs are for the soul” (1986b:243), thus suggesting the integration of the two components, namely; bodily and spiritual needs without dichotomizing between them. This sense of compatibility echoes the metaphor of the church as ‘a body’ in I Corinthians 12, which would also refer to the acknowledgment that “salvation is a broader and more inclusive whole” (Potter, 1981:298). Just as “individual physical healing is a part of something greater, namely; God’s saving work on behalf of the whole creation” (Potter, 1981:298)

Oduyoye equally argues and emphasizes on one of the characteristics of the salvation Jesus brought as outlined in Paul’s letter to the Ephesians 2 namely; to reconcile us to God and with

fellow humans with whom sin has made us alienated. That salvation she opines -referring to Jesus, “does not only unite us all to himself but also to him we are at one with God” (2002a:20). Thus echoing salvation as it “denotes the process or event by which the state of affairs comes about” (Brand, 2002:58). Perhaps, that could also be “an equivalent of reconciliation or sanctification or liberation” (Brand, 2002:58), which also aligns with “whatever Christ had achieved for believers through his death” (Brand, 2002:58), namely; reconciling humanity back to itself and back to God.

#### **4.5.3 Wholeness as Soundness of Persons**

The affirmation of reconciling humanity back to God and itself, it could be assumed that it comes with some positive concerns especially, which could serve the human good. One of those could include the promise of life which Jesus promises as that which believers should have in abundance. That Oduyoye sees as “Jesus worked for the soundness of individuals and structures, both religious and social” (Oduyoye, 2002a:21). Such assertions she observes could actively involve in dethroning the efforts of dichotomization between what is ‘sacred and secular’ or ‘body and soul’ in respect to salvific discourses. It is such that in the context of social and political oppression for instance, as often the case in the African continent, Oduyoye opines, “we cannot forget that on the personal level, individuals are plagued with feelings of estrangement from God” (2002a:21). As such, a life of wholeness would require that one becomes an “integrated person(s) with the private and political not separated” (2002a:21) which concerns soundness of individual minds. Oduyoye argues further, “Christian theology must promote the interdependence of distinctive beings and stand by the principles of inclusiveness and interdependence” (1995b:485). Hence, she sees as salvation that which God inspires to include wholeness, well-being, shalom, healthy living (1995b:485). Moreover, putting those concepts together could result to what she sees and describes as soundness of persons.

#### **4.5.4 Wholeness as Being Authentic**

Oduyoye’s assertion of wholeness also refers to what she describes as a condition “to be authentic” (Oduyoye, 1995b:485), which she sees as “the norm of humanness” (1995b:485). She argues this while attesting that “both women and men are of equal value before God” (1995b:485), yet, Christian scriptures she says, is used “to legitimize the now- inclusion of femaleness” (1995b:485). Oduyoye observes such happenings while African churches unlike

their western counterparts “declare that no problems exist” (1995b:486). Thus, fail to see the fact that “inclusiveness as a principle of community- building does not achieve any success if women are limited in their exercise of initiative and authority” (1995b:486). For Oduyoye sees it as a concern to be tackled, thus laments that “the church in Africa has not always accepted that brokenness exists” (1995b:486), thus, has been indicated she argues “in its refusal to see the hurt of women” (1995b:486).

However, in her underlying concern where she articulates wholeness as ‘being authentic,’ Oduyoye affirms, “a church that constantly ignores the implications of the gospel for the lives of women and others of the underclass, cannot continue to be an authentic voice of salvation” (1995b:485). For if such churches dare to, they will portray a contrast of what they say and do. In another sense, she declares, “until we can say that what hurts women also hurts the entire body of Christ will we in truth be able to speak of ‘one body’” (1995b:485). Thus, asserting further that being authentic as that which requires an attainment where a sense of equality between individuals, who are free to be human, to express their God-given potentials.

#### 4.5.5 Wholeness as Recognition of Full Humanity

Oduyoye identifies wholeness as a recognition of the full humanity of women when she sees how the participation of women has become an ‘ecumenical issue’ and the Christ (church) is made up of “adult males” (1991:473). Such dispositions would imply that women and young children are not given due consideration, though being members equally, yet, are not integrated. Such systems Oduyoye refer to as “unpleasant system” (1992c:314) because for her, “where you find an unpleasant system you can be sure women are its worst victims and easiest targets” (1992c:314). As such, Oduyoye declares, “everything needs a form of transformation” (2005a:281), and prays, “God, in your grace, transform this situation, grant us veneration for the humanity of the other” (2005a:282).

However, this recognition of full humanity which Oduyoye argues for can reach its desired level when “the church opens up its structures to unmask the thinking that sets up patriarchal hierarchies and to enable the divine plan for full human relationships between women and men to develop” (1995b:486). It possesses a great concern for females how certain structures of the church remains closed for them while open to men. Therefore, when such consensus establishes itself, it would result to what Oduyoye describes as “internal integrity” (1991:473), and enhance a condition where *women* especially, would “live truly human lives” (1986a:145). As

they endeavor to interact within African communities as a whole and Christian communities, in particular, as equal members just like their counterparts.

#### 4.5.6 The Church as an Agent of Enhancing Wholeness

In another phase of her arguments for wholeness, Oduyoye sees the church as "a model of the community" (Oduyoye, 1996b:498), which seems to be capable of influencing and admonishing the idea of wholeness within itself. On the contrary, this same church (the body of Christ), she sees promoting orders that are oppressive on other members, notably women. For she opines this reality while recalling and equating the church to a family that "the wholeness and the welfare of the family are reflected in the well-being of its members whenever they are found, as well as dependent upon it" (Oduyoye, 1991:474).

As part of this family with the expectations of unity and acceptance, Oduyoye observes the contrary. For she utters "women see the church as divided against itself for if it militates against, and marginalizes women" (2001b:81) that they do not integrate as members of the supposed to be family. Such situations have resulted to what Oduyoye describes that "the disunity of the church is a threat to its catholicity (universality, wholeness, ecumenicity) (1991:474), so much so that it presents a contrast to the function of the church. For Oduyoye has described the church to "serve the role of sustaining the hope that human beings can live and care for one another" (1996b:498) which to her, would "provide an active, supportive community for people are accustomed to living in caring communities" (1996b:498).

Consequently, the assumption that the church functions as an agent to enhancing wholeness by Oduyoye above are not in a way substantial due to the categorization of hierarchical orders. These hierarchies are present in the church (body of Christ) that are expected to act as a family have succeeded in doing the contrary, namely; placing women as unequal to men. Thus, have made the women "aware of bearing more than half of the life support" (Oduyoye, 2002a:73). Oduyoye, however, affirms this when she says, it is because "Africa continues to produce structures and systems barren of all creativity...because they use the strength of their manhood on what does not build a living community" (2002a:73) namely; structures that project inequality and oppression on women. To that end, she continues, has resulted to why "Africa now stands in danger of further battering by home-grown patriarchies" (2002a:73). Oduyoye, however, suggests the adoption of concepts she calls "reconciled diversity and conciliar



fellowship” (Oduyoye, 1991:475), which for her would attempt “to designate our visible disunity in such a way that we may leave room to continue to talk together” (1991:475).

#### 4.6 Conclusion

Oduyoye’s soteriological search is indeed welcoming and contextual to especially this study. From the general view of salvation and wholeness, she presents earlier has had some proofs of affirmation. Though the expected wholeness she proclaims to include ‘being human in its truest sense’ might not have actualized in the lives of African women like the above analysis shows, yet she suggests proactive measures that could lead to what she claims. Thus, the continual search for the attainment of a woman with the full dignity that lives a flourishing-related life which Oduyoye upholds is still a point of concern.

For such situations where women are denied the access to live toward the expression of their God-given potentials considerably calls for their salvation, and more to that –their wholeness. The reason behind that relates to why such lived experiences distort the full expression of being human in the lives of women, as such. Their continual being under the subjection of the societal norms that discredits their God – given abilities which in a way limit their humanness to nothing than caregivers solely in most societies.

However, such articulations to Oduyoye’s view stands contrary to the expected realization of humanness in its full essence. Women as God’s image bearers as much as the men, Oduyoye opts to reiterate why dignity of both is essential to have a common attainment at the God who creates, loves and having the flourishing of each as important as the other. However, the disparity therein human relationship in general, and the treatment of women calls for why women suspect as we have seen above, whether the Jesus proclaimed in Christian theology is efficient to save women as well. This present that the conceptualization of inclusiveness in Jesus’ admonishments varies significantly to the practice living and inequality therein the treatment of women supposedly fellow members of the Christian community.



## Chapter 5: Salvation as Wholeness? Toward a Therapeutic Understanding

### 5.1 Introduction

This study has thus far examined some features of salvation theology from scholars like Mercy Oduyoye and Jesse Mugambi, whose understanding of salvation relates to the practical application to life. What is significant about the survey includes how it has contributed to a broader perspective on the study of salvation within the confines of the African prosperity gospels. Here, we shall concentrate on the ‘heartbeat’ of the study namely, therapeutic understanding of salvation. The concentration will now go as far as to suggest from the previous chapters, then build up to what therein salvation as therapeutic.

Hiltner (2011:157) expands on the two critical components of salvation in a clear manner. In his emphasis on a ‘*from*’ dimension, it is that which revolves around “the one who knows and experiences salvation from some bondage or undesirable conditions and has a test of some rescue” (1968:157). In a broader sense, “we are saved either as individuals or community and not from every pre-existing condition, rather, from everything that means bondage in fact” (1968:157). Similarly, he observes that salvation does have a ‘*for*’ dimension, which in modern terms he says “the ‘*for*’ is thought of regarding freedom, of release, of an exultant relaxation of the previous tension” (1968:157). In other words, he notes, “it is like awakening to find that one has just crossed an abyss of which one has perhaps, unaware while the crossing was taking place” (1968:157). So, making the two components pointers to what informs salvation as not singly an act of coming out from a condition at which humanity, as well as other creation, have been defaced but also what lies ahead namely, what makes up its product. The product here relates to what comprises of the expectation therein after the salvation experience by the one saved irrespective of the dimension such salvation comes.

Consequently, the study still has another significant component to explore, namely, inaugurating the therapeutic interpretations of salvation. It is important to see also, other factors as what ought to call for liberation such that the healthy state of the whole self, becomes the sole goal of any salvific quest. Therefore, to see sin beyond an act of commission would result in the need for holistic perception wherein a therapeutic understanding of salvation could apply which sees salvation as healing. Such is because a call for therapeutic salvation is one that “recognizes the need for forgiveness, it stresses instead the capacity of fallen humanity to be

reconciled and energized to participate in the life of God” (Ayers, 2002:272). Such a view of salvation would result in conceptualizing sin as multi-dimensional to include all that threatens one’s harmony of the various components of the body. To this end, it signifies that “therapeutic salvation seeks to identify sin in relational terms than in legal or forensic which references sin as guilt; but rather, sin as a disease” (Ayes, 2002:272).

## 5.2 The quest for salvation

As already established elsewhere above, salvation and health are two words from the same root implying that discussion on salvation and healing particularly in this study, relates to the quest for freedom. Such quest for freedom says Moltmann (1992) is people’s first experience with God which characterizes the experience of being set free for life. For individuals who are possessed by God’s Spirit notes Moltmann, “experience liberation in different sectors of their lives” (1992:99). Thus becomes the fact to establish, that yearning for liberation has been an experience and would continue to be since factors calling for salvation abounds in different facets of human existence. The human quest for salvation, however, could relate to the fact that “humanity is created with limitations and that illness, is part of their existence” (Westermann, 1971:10). Therefore, makes it a significant norm that freedom from any of such limitations or illnesses which threaten with the flourishing of lives becomes significant.

Health seen as salvation is another element in its separate form, that is obtainable when there is “wholeness or integration or harmony between body, mind, and spirit, between the individual and others, and between the person and God” (Ram, 1995:10). As mentioned elsewhere above, the concept of health in the ongoing study has to do with total harmony of oneself, and not just the absence of sickness being either physically or mentally. Moreover, so broadly speaking, health relates to “a maximum quality of life, called wellness” (Ram, 1995:10; Olagunju, 2013:113). For as important as human health is, “it neither competes with love, justice, wisdom, peace, and creativity nor does it guarantee them, instead, it is no substitute for them, but they are impossible without some degree of health” (Hiltner, 1968:165). To that end, conditions responsible for ill-health are “social, economic and spiritual, as well as bio-medical, suggesting that health is an issue of the justice, of the peace, the integrity of creation and spirituality

From the ongoing discussions on salvation, however, it is glaring to pay careful attention to certain facts, seeing that they are core to virtually every discourse on salvation namely, ‘the saved from’ and ‘saved for’ dimensions respectively. For these said core concerns determine

to a large extent why the call for salvation as a concern that differs in different scenarios. Such to mean that what becomes the reason for salvation in one context varies from the other, which also determines the various ways that salvation is understood. Affirming to this idea of variation in understanding salvation, Kato says “what one is saved from determines the nature of the salvation” (1975:41). To this end, we could deduce to articulate why salvation ought not to be an evidential phenomenon such as the prosperity gospel propagate but, as a holistic concept which the ongoing study tries to establish.

Emphasizing further on the relevance of ‘*from*’ and ‘*for*’ dimension of salvation is to zoom briefly into what is obtainable as a determinant factor for salvation in traditional<sup>71</sup> Africa. The quest for salvation for Africans before the coming of Western Christianity differ greatly to the concern involving “escape from divine punishment” (Ibid) as the Western missionaries and subsequently, proclaim within Christian theology. For the Africans, however, what ignites their quest for salvation has to do with the sense of acceptance as opines by Kato, that “to be saved is to be accepted in both the community of the living and then in the city of the dead” (1975:42). Such conception of salvation is taken further by Kwenda (1999:2) while quoting Mbiti thus, the greatest tragedy that could befall an African is to cast away from the community both of the living and the living dead.

To conceptualize salvation from the traditional African point of view, therefore, would suffice to involve a humanistic approach which presents an understanding that Kato observes as what calls for salvation is limited to social ills. For instance, if the quest for salvation is limited to attending to social ills solely, it would also present a myopic conception which Kato says “if sin is only societal, the so-called social gospel has to be the right solution” (1975:43). The above mentioned possesses an affirmation to the one-sided proclamation of salvation by the prosperity gospel already surveyed above. However, what concerns Africans as they yearn for salvation goes further than just societal ills – although such plays a vital role in their search for salvation but “one’s prospects of attaining ancestor hood” (Kwenda, 1999:2). Such for Traditional Africans is a pointer to salvation.

Further, on a ‘*from*’ and ‘*to*’ dimension, another element has been introduced to add up to the former two, namely, “the agency, the means through which salvation is effected” (Corrington,

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<sup>71</sup> By traditional Africa here we mean to say the traditional religions of Africans before the advent of Western missionaries and the Christian gospel.

1992:44). For instance, in the case of Christianity, Jesus Christ is seen as the agent, as such, several questions which Corrington (1992) raised are used for the explorations of salvation the ongoing study is set to establish. Some of those include, how does the need for salvation arise? How is it perceived? From what or whom does one needs salvation from, and how is one saved? Who are those to be saved? Moreover, finally, is salvation different for different Persons? Careful attention to these questions would guide this study to establishing a concept of salvation it proposes namely, holistic salvation.

### 5.3 Patriarchy and Oppression

Several studies with a focus on salvation have emerged within the circle of Christian theology, some of which include, black theology, ecological theology, Feminist Theology, Womanist theology to mention but a few, are geared toward establishing each, the possibility of gaining freedom. Feminist theology has particularly in their theory an “institution which is possibly the most talked about, called patriarchy” (Francis *et al.*, 2003:14). The said patriarchy happens to have replaced the earlier term that was often called ‘sexism’ a term conceived as “the willing tool of oppression” (Thatcher, 1993:3). As its description entails, and an instrument of oppression, patriarchy is said to exist “whenever one finds systemic and normative inequalities and subordination” (Oduyoye, 1995d:131) seen technically, patriarchy is an ideology (Thatcher, 1993:3).

Regarding its historical roots, Thatcher further outlines that “patriarchy is older than the Judeo – Christian tradition and found in every known society” (Thatcher, 1993:3). Ever since then, it has been a tool of oppression which in most cases supports various structures suggests “the possibility of a Christianity free of patriarchy is the supreme act of faith and the expression of an ultimate hope” (Thatcher, 1993:4). Such articulations having established through the historical roots of patriarchy above tends to affirm the possibilities that, certain forms of practices within Christendom support either directly or indirectly in enhancing the said ideology. The above descriptions of patriarchy would here emerge to the efforts of articulating what the whole concept entails regarding what it means.

Patriarchy as a term has had several connotations from different worlds of scholarship all gearing toward highlighting what it entails, hence, having a similar or same point of reference as to what defines patriarchy. One of such states “patriarchy is the hierarchical system of social organization in which men control cultural, political and economic structures” (Kendall *et al.*,

2007; cf. Okoroafor & Iheriohanma, 2014:113). In simple terms, patriarchy is “the rule by fathers – a form of social organization in which males dominate females” (Okoroafor & Iheriohanma, 2014:114). It is also “a system of male authority which oppresses women through social, political and economic institutions” (Makama, 2013:117). Observing from the definitions above it is glaring that there are elements of commonality relating to the various institutions that patriarchal ideology operates. Some of which include, a systemic oppression by a male over a female that is pervasively functional through different institutions as social, political, economic and cultural. These institutions “whether it is feudal, capitalist or socialist; a sex- gender system and a system of economic discrimination operate simultaneously” (Makama, 2013:117). Hence the conclusion that patriarchy is “an unjust social system that is oppressive to women” (2013:117).

The inclusion of various institutions above as they constitute the oppressive constituencies of patriarchy would suffice to articulate the different effects of such oppressions on women who are usually the oppressed. Considering the various institutions above it is glaring to say that, the operation of such institutions would involve in the suppression of the other – who here are women. As such, we could deduce here to speculate that the oppressed do not only experience denial of particular privileges due to them but also, the impositions of certain factors upon them. Affirming the reality of such effects, for instance, the men rule over women is “maintained by not including women from access to necessary economically productive resources and by restricting women’s sexuality” (Ibid). The result of such treatments amongst other things inspires women to seek for liberation from those structures that distort their existence as full humans.

It is also prominent at this point to mention the various ways women writers are responding to the oppressive patriarchal institutions. Despite the population of women in most societies provided that they be patriarchal, calls for subjugation and humiliation of different sort, yet, women are always at the receiving end of all such patriarchal institutions constitute. For instance, one of the forms of subjugation namely, social discriminations, the patriarchal – led rule “reduces womanhood to a mere infidel and a second class citizen” (Makama, 2013:115). Moreso, Oduyoye adds “women are said to fit only to the church, to work in kitchens, and to bear children” (1995d:5). Such connotations have resulted to why feminist writers attest that “we cannot be content with less” (Rüssel, 1974:15) and so they seek what they call the “liberation now” (1974:17). Such liberations Rüssel continues, “is on the lips of countless

women and men in every part of the globe” (1974:17), hence, has become “a cry from the heart; cry out of oppression; a cry for a new future” (1974:17).

Following the underlying theories of feminist theologians in articulating what constitutes their quest for salvation or liberation from patriarchal ideology, it is prominent also to highlight further on that regard. Seeing that patriarchal structures have contributed to the degradation of women in societies, thus arises the call that “all limitations to the fullness of life in the Christ event ought to be uprooted in their entirety.” (Oduyoye, 1995d:4). The essence of which relates to Jesus’ universal mission of redeeming the entire universe with a focus that “we might have life and have it more abundantly.” (1995d:4). Such a life of abundance includes what this study would suggest namely, ‘wholeness’ where every aspect of life flourishes which would then speak of salvation presence.

Despite the various conceptions of salvation outlined thus far both within classical theology and the prosperity gospel, the broadest understanding of the term which serves as a pointer toward a holistic understanding abounds. Salvation says Corrington, “denotes an experience of the establishment or re-establishment of health, safety, or security that accomplishes from the outside, primarily in the face of threats from one or more hostile powers.” (1992:44). The attainment to that, speaks of the salvific understanding which the ongoing study proposes, and could only come to actualization when the idea of silence that occupies especially the African woman and the oppressive structures changes to proactive measures. For over time, says Oduyoye “African women had learned to know their oppressors but had held their peace” (1995d:3). These are occurring through the usage of “traditional coping devices by smiling at the insensitivity of husbands and brothers and sons and bosses, and with equanimity, they go about their self-assigned jobs of ensuring life” (1995d:3).

However, further highlights on the operations of patriarchal institutions suggest that the rule of the fathers influences the unequal attainment of a flourishing life to women, especially. Such influences noticed through various strategies agreed as norms in any given society irrespective of the effect they cause the other. Below, here, is an outline of few of those factors that have contributed to making African women, in particular, seekers after salvation, though not exclusively them, seeing that they are the most affected due to their lived experiences. Such is a fact because “salvation is not something that happens to an individual but to a whole community of beings who have different problems and interact across ontological boundaries.” (Kwenda, 1999:11).

## 5.4 A Survey of Lived Experiences: Women in Question

Equating salvation with health goes beyond the traditional knowledge of forgiveness of sin and the broader understanding of health as beyond the absence of illness serves this study better. Such would help us have a deeper understanding of the lived experience of women and why they are mostly seekers of salvation. As noted earlier, salvation is having to do with the wholeness of an individual which includes, setting free from any activity that threatens the flourishing of such a one. Those above would suffice to mean that, several lived experiences as will be discussed below, calls for the need of saving whoever might be the victim of such.

Previously, two terms relating to salvation namely, a *'from'* and *'to'* dimension we have identified elsewhere above. However, further analysis has suggested the third concept namely, the agent of salvation which signifies the significance therein that “the saved are in need of a savior” (Ayers, 2002:270). Moreso, the African sense of communal life which signifies the idea of the wholeness of a community, and the absence of which speaks of ill-health, calls for the need of therapy to bring about healing. Affirming to this view, while quoting the words of an African theologian Laurenti Magesa Kalu says

If the instinctive cultural impulse of most Africans leads to the belief that being a community or in the community is healthy, then, it also implies that any lack of communal harmony is ‘disease.’ Specifically, the absence of physical health is often understood to be symptomatic of a lack of spiritual, emotional or moral health; it is physically and spiritually destructive to the society and the individual concern. (Kalu, 2008:265).

With that in mind, the need to survey into various lived experiences preventing the attainment of the wholeness becomes crucial, which leads to discussing some few in the next section.

### 5.4.1 Restriction to Western Education

Makama (2013) articulates the concern on education and its relevance that, “Education is a vehicle that breaks the shackles of poverty thereby leading to transformation, development, and progress (Ikoni, 2009). Perhaps admitting that women take center stage of such denial in many African societies (Makama, 2013:120) expounds on the level which suppression of women contributes to their plight for freedom. For since women say Makama, are still engaging in productive and civic activities, yet “are still being constrained by their responsibility for everyday tasks in the household division of labor” (2013:120). The result of which creates a diversity of opportunities for poverty that women continue to struggle with on a daily basis. To this end, Mamdani (1996) affirms further that the incidence of poverty is more rampant of the



female gender in Africa because of discrimination in educational opportunities (Makama, 2013).

The ongoing discussion on denial or restriction to women's educational pursuit in some parts in Africa is an extension of the patriarchal principles. Makama states how prevalent it has become that in most communities "financing in girls' schooling is regarded as investing for the advantage of the family she will eventually marry into, unlike in the case of boys" (2013:121). Such arguments he continues, hold in particular for higher education, which involves greater expenses "and is seen to be non-essential for females whose main role will be in home keeping and childbearing" (2013:121). The result of such is the continual decline from the side of women whose access to education viewed as a waste thus enhances the drop in the quest for intellectual empowerment.

With such a stereotypical assertion on women toward education, this common saying that 'knowledge is power' would have no essence in the lives of the women who do not have access to quality education to have the said power. The ability to be self-reliant, and dwelling in the patriarchal-led society becomes difficult, instead, a continual living under the siege of suppression. Such articulations Oduyoye captures clearly that "African women should not be allowed a western education because that is not profitable for their families." (Hennelly, 1995:186). However, the reality that "education provides women with the opportunity to be less dependent on men to have more control over their sexual reproductive health" (Makama, 2013:120) becomes absent. For since there is low exposure to the knowledge that helps to safeguard what is needful, they would continue to be in such predicaments, thus resulting to constant yearning for liberation.

Besides the inability to be independent, another factor associated with women's lack of education relates to their health. The phrase 'health is wealth,' applies both to different facets of life because of the broader understanding therein wealth. Wealth as often understood relates to possessions one acquires under their custody. However, a broader perspective of the concept of wealth goes beyond just that, as this study suggests, to include the ability to be oneself in full essence. In the confines of women's health, attainment to such wealth becomes difficult in a sense due to little or no exposure – as the case might be- to education as stated above, with reasons coming from patriarchal influence. Thus, issues such as "fewer births and greater spacing between births leading to both a healthier mother and child" (Makama, 2013:120) is not guaranteed. Such experiences have yielded to proclamations that "women's experience



should become an integral part of what goes into the definition of being human” (Hennelly, 1995:184).

The situations expressed above, and the extent to which they create a continual distance to women’s cause captures the attention of African women theologians. Oduyoye observing such situations says “they are the most alienating because people come to accept what is said of them” (1986a:86). Saying that while referring to African women she continues, “they become strangers to their potential and cannot imagine any other way of organizing society or their personal lives” (1986a:86). A complete turn away from such principles says Oduyoye, demands a “reorientation toward the person as the child of God and the whole people as the people of God” (1986a:86). Besides, argues Oduyoye, “the Christ of Christianity touches human needs at all levels, and Africans are, but ordinary members of the human race are feeling the need for salvation” (1986a:99).

The attention to this relates to the examination of the consequences that follow namely, lack of power which is obtainable with the acquisition of education, and secondly, lack of wealth which anchors the existence of health in an individual. The continual dwelling in such situations, however, would not or does not guarantee the life of wholeness that his study proposes. As such, the already mentioned fact that women desire a ‘liberation now,’ becomes relevant. The liberation yearn for here has a motive which relates to establishing a “humanity that we both share” (Rüssel, 1974:17), and that which expresses a “determination to work toward a new humanity in which women, men, and the whole world are free.” (1974:17). Such desires leading toward the attainment of ‘new humanity’ where women could express themselves as full humans become what they yearn for and as such ensuring liberation.

#### **5.4.2 Issues with Biological Fruitfulness**

As part of what is the lived experiences of African women which they desire liberation from, it ‘biological fruitfulness.’ Childlessness describes Siwila, in a marriage relationship is mostly associated with failure of women to conceive (2015:62). Such is how most African societies characterizes the worth of a female which depends on her ability or inability to procreate. As a matter of great concern, such attitudes create an avenue where “lives and relationships are ruined daily because of the ‘child factor,’ particularly in childlessness within marriage.” (Farley & Jones, 1999:108). Such pressures reaching to the extent of which the child factor has become

a stereotype with the description as “childlessness is a taboo subject,” (1999:108) even among women themselves who are often fond of such saying to other women.

Oduyoye who is a living witness of the above issue outlines her experiences as one from West Africa. She begins by saying “for me, then, childlessness has been a challenge to my womanhood, my humanity, and my faith. To say I have overcome would be a sheer arrogance, for we live by grace, and it is by the grace of God that I am who I am.” (Farley & Jones, 1999:119). Oduyoye while lamenting on that, goes to an extent to say, “I regretted the decision to get married,” (1999:111). For to her “a childless marriage was an embarrassment” (1999:111), since “the agony of a childless mother increases every day as she quests for a child.” (1999:112). Such laments hold firm so much that even the identity of a woman is “hidden under the disguise of whether or not can bear children to be classified as a mother” (Siwila, 2015:62).

Such pressures hardly are taken into consideration on what could be the causes and whether or not the woman suffering from the challenge of childlessness is solely responsible. In fact “a childless woman would be blamed irrespective of the fact that her husband may be sterile or that she may be facing some health hazards,” (Oduyoye & Kanyoro, 1992:142). Which could result in the perception that “people marry for procreation” (1992:141). Besides, the overemphasis leading to unjust treatment of women results when “the exclusive focus of the personhood of a woman is quantified to her biological functions” (1992:22), so that “birth-giving becomes the first indication of her wholeness” (1992:22). As a result, those unable to bear children the society sees as a misfortune while leaving such women with thoughts and questions of identity and self-worth, and what such would say of them in regards to their contribution to the community.

The placement of women’s wholeness also goes a long way to what the global economy measures as the viability of any economy in which profit has become the new idol (Oduyoye, 1999c:74). Within the confines of this study, however, and the issue under discussion namely, biological fruitfulness, the test of viability relates to how many children a woman produces. This Oduyoye raises while indicating that “under globalization, the centrality and preciousness of human life (*- of a female in particular – emphasis added*), has been shaken while profit and wealth have replaced people” (1999c:76). Such that “human beings – here women in particular- have to pass the test of viability before they are qualified to access certain treatments meant to desirable rights of an individual (1999c:75). Just as the global economy praises and

gives credits to those of the first class as more valuable in that context, so has the life of a woman equated that “her worth depends on whether or not, she bears children” (1999c:76) which describe her flourishing as well. Such is the perception that flourishing associates with only individuals and not the community, such Jantzen disagrees to emphasized instead, that it should not be an individualistic affair but a communal one (1996:67).

Further expressing her lack of ignorance of what is obtainable and acceptable in her context, Oduyoye reminds herself that, “the seven signs of human well-being as viewed by the Akan of Ghana include the power of procreation” (Farley & Jones, 1999:105). Despite such familiarity of the norm and context, Oduyoye does not accept such as the ideal for a human life that is limited solely to natural fruitfulness. Equating the end of life in eschatological terms, she says, “the aim, the goal of life for many Africans focuses on the fullness and fruitfulness of life here, in this land of the living” (Farley & Jones, 1999:105). In her view, therefore, Oduyoye speaking as a woman who “has no biological progeny” (1999:106), describes what has kept her going despite the predicament. She has committed herself “to live and to struggle to contribute to the quest for humanization, for justice, and for the community” (1999:106); which is in connection with “playing a role in support of fellow women” (Siwila, 2015:71). Oduyoye also expresses that she becomes “a woman alone who inspires the community, and prays that the men and females she touches and who touch her will grow and prosper as God would have all humans do; a woman whose life helps effect earth that is prosperous and at peace.” (1999:107). These amongst others are concerns raised by African women which have contributed immensely to demeaning their worth.

Androcentric world – a replicate of patriarchy, intensifies the tension through the high demand from women as fulfilling such requirements defines them. Oduyoye explains, “androcentric society expects women to be the producers of human beings, but the experience of women is that their development and perception of humanness and human community - *is not the priority.*”( *emphasis added*), (Fiorenza, 1996:128). The result of which calls for the deconstruction of cultural norms that are oppressive to women by affirming that, “Christ challenges every culture today as he did the Jewish culture in his lifetime. He denounced whatever enslaved people and rejected anything that kept people from appreciating their basic human dignity” (Oduyoye & Kanyoro, 1992:115). Such cultural influence with degrading and segregating systems, created by individuals, are systems set up within our cultures which

legitimize the exploitation of some while preserving the privileged status, prestige, and power of others (1992:115).

#### 5.4.3 Violation of Vital Right to Health

Every society operates with principles gearing toward making its inhabitant's responsible members and having their lives guided by the said principles. Such rights irrespective of the context forming them gives the sense of confidence to the adherents such that the violation of any of such calls for summoning whoever is responsible for the breach. Within the confines of the ongoing study, one of these rights related to health which Moltmann opines as 'fundamental' to everyone, that denial to it becomes a denial of a right. To this end, the World Health Organization (2009) reports, "women are being denied access to medical care at key moments of their lives."

As it is a matter of human right, women are not an exception since they are equally, members of the society promoting health as a right. Just as it is for every other member of the community, "women have the right to the gratification of the highest possible standard of physical and mental health. The enjoyment of this right is vital to their life and well-being, and their ability to partake in all areas of public and private life" (WHO, 2009). However, the realization of a level which guarantees subscription to enjoy the benefits and claiming their rights as regarding health would require some deconstructions of certain structures, including those set by patriarchal influence whose sole aim is to oppress women. The inability to uproot such structures would result in a possible violation of the said right in the lives of many individuals perhaps, women. Thus, the affirmation that "violence against women is an obstacle to the accomplishment of the objectives of equality, development, and peace. Violence against women both violates and invalidates the enjoyment by women of their human rights and fundamental freedoms." (WHO, 2014).

Other areas which threaten women's health relates to another form of violation namely, sexism. As already mentioned elsewhere in the study, sexism is a former term which champions the 'the rule of the father' ideology, later called patriarchy. It encourages and emphasizes the course of oppression in that regard, such that women having no objection toward their men's sexual quests to the extent that societies are becoming places "where everything is a commodity, and this includes women's bodies" (Makama, 2013:129). In addition to this fact, "a considerable number of women are sold into slavery, as either wives or prostitutes"

2013:129). Such practices are carried out as rights propagating patriarchal authority over her subjects namely women, hence, contributes to one of the concerns of WHO having to do with enhancing “child survival and safe motherhood” (Makama, 2013:129).

The idea of safety motherhood, African women theologians, argue, is more than just the concern of child -bearing which is the norm but perhaps explores it more. In most African societies, for instance, different cultural practices regarding the self-worth of women are still operating. Some of those are rituals that a woman has to undergo particularly, before, during, and after childbirth and some of which without health consciousness. Siwila states “the control over the mother’s diet such as denying her nutritional food and the demand for forced labor to ease the labor pains at delivery can be detrimental to the health of both the mother and the unborn child (2015:66). In such instances, she adds, there are restrictions to cultural and traditional norms with no regards to what concerns her health or that of the child (2015:66). In fact, some rituals demand that an expectant mother go separate from the rest of the community for both her safety and that of the child and be under the watch of the ancestors who are the custodians of the pregnancy with or without mindful of health consequences. In such instance, the expectant mother is often referred to as a patient (2015:66). Culminating motherhood from a broader perspective, Siwila observes that “it is not a biological factor only, but it is about nurturing, protection and promotion of life” (2015:75). That she attests following the role which other women play in the life of an expectant mother ascribed above. One of the roles they play that depict the ongoing study is the availability of persons. In instances where a woman is estranged from the society or under hard labor, a community of other women rallied around to offer her comfort, encouragement, which would serve as healing to her feeling (2015:70).

#### **5.4.4 Gender- Based Discrimination (GBD)**

Just as important are the factors already mentioned, whose contributions to what makes up the lived experiences of women that make them seekers of salvation is gender-based discrimination. A norm with prominence in virtually every African society takes different forms through which the operation occurs. It is said to have caused “all-pervasive global problem which has induced considerable gender inequality in many countries of the world” (Emakhu, 2014:775). Nevertheless, despite all the dimensions it takes, the focus group often targeted are the women, thus a reminder of patriarchal institutions whose aims are discussed

already above. Here, the discussions on this concept take different perspectives through which the various aspects constituting it are significant for addressing.

For a good grasp of what constitutes gender-based discrimination, it would involve some clarity regarding definition, and further on how those dimensions contribute to the search for liberation. By way of definition, “Gender discrimination refers to the exercise of granting or declining rights or civil liberties to a person based on their gender” (Olaogun *et al.*, 2015:294). Such kinds of treatment closely related to the popular idea of gender-based violence “leading to unfair conduct directed to an individual or a group by their gender which denies them their rights, and sometimes resources” (Olaogun *et al.*, 2015:294). However, in other societies, “the discrimination is a long- standing practice, and it is acceptable to both sexes” (Olaogun *et al.*, 2015:294). Moreso, from the World Health Organization (WHO), this idea is defined as “the deliberate use of physical power or force, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, against a group or community. That either result in or have a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment or deprivation” (Semahegn & Mengistie, 2015:1).

The above definition tends to raise many issues incorporating into the knowledge of gender-based discrimination. These elements of violence do not occur without reasons enhancing their propagation. Here again, a reconsideration of patriarchal institutions becomes relevant so much that, the penetration of its power in various sectors results in the violation of rights which the preceding discussion focuses on exploring.

#### **5.4.5 Women and Economy**

Culturally and traditionally, women’s role ends on childbearing in most Africa societies which contrasts what is obtainable in other parts of the world, which seems to have significantly enhanced the inability to the attainment of independence on many aspects of their being. One of such aspects relating to the acquisition of economic freedom meant to cushion the poverty-related struggles. In their search for economic freedom, women “face much discrimination that limits their opportunities to develop their full potential by equality with men” (Makama, 2013:122). Some of these discriminations occur even in areas where women qualify to contribute their quotas to the development of the sector, yet due to their femaleness, such accesses they do not attain. For instance, Emakhu aligns that despite the right of women to work without any form of discrimination is known and guaranteed by many international and

national agencies, only a few get to actualization. Many sectors of the workforce, however, “do not hesitate in handing out sack letters to their married female staff that gets pregnant in quick succession” (2013: 781).

Such forms of discrimination which bases on the sexuality of a woman result in her deprivation of what could be the route out of economic depression leading to rampant poverty. However, since the structures are patriarchal centered, thus the efforts of justifying such actions in all cost abound, such that “she is to be seen not heard” (Emakhu, 2013:777), and their likes. The result of such assessments, “women have the view that the exercise of patriarchy and the absence of gender equality are partly accountable for their underdevelopment and low productivity” (Okoroafor & Iheriohanma, 2014: 108). Henceforth, resulting to their continual quest for economic freedom which is a form of salvation in a sense, that the ongoing study upholds.

The above mentioned attests how the society which every member expects equal treatment while claiming a sort of rights -some of which as health- are becoming impossible due to patriarchal domination. The result of which increases the level of poverty and dependability that renders those under subjugation vulnerable to different life threats, such as exposure to sexual violence. The result of which leads to increased chances of contracting terminal illnesses and other sexual related problems, which also increase the likelihood for the quest of holistic salvation. Hence, women are “continually victims of sexual harassment and failure on their part to submit to these undue sexual demands from their bosses, often get them in sack letter” (Emakhu, 2013:781).

Despite the risks involved in the exposure to sexual harassment which women are victims of and the fact that violence against women in all forms is a deprivation of a right, yet there are further assessments. One of which stresses how such denial of rights is “acknowledged internationally as a threat to the health and rights of women” (Bamiwuye & Odimegwu, 2014:2). However, not only are the pains of deprivation of privileges resulting to threatening the health of the women, but it also has a societal influence. Thus relating to the recognition that, “discrimination against women is unharmonious with human dignity and with the well-being of the family and the society” (Emakhu, 2013:776). In addition to this, there is often effort from the patriarchal world to justifying the actions of marginalization using biblical injunction particularly, the Biblical creation story. Such as “women are subordinate to men



because they were created out of a man's ribs and as such, they are the belongings of the men” (Ushe, 2015:104).

Mercy Oduyoye whose thoughts form a considerable part of this work explains the salvation of women as ‘humanization,’ describing and emphasizing the salvation of women as freedom from oppression. For her, that would enable the appreciation of the God’s image in the lives of women as in others such as the male, whom most cultures and traditions hold as the ideal image bearers of God. Consequently, the idea of social reconstruction in the thoughts of Mugambi seen above expresses another form of salvation. These two contributions have thus far, helped us to subscribe the broader view of salvation that goes beyond ‘forgiveness of sin’ but also have a view of structural sin. Thus, agrees with one of the theories of feminist theology that attest to the enhancement of wholeness of everyone in the society and not women exclusively (Jones, 2000).

## 5.5 Salvation as Healing?

The analyses thus far of various theories relating to the interpretation of salvation have served well and as pointers through which this study would take its stand. The exciting part of the survey includes the provision of a base from which another model of interpretation could evolve, namely the therapeutic interpretations. It is evident that understanding of salvation in therapeutic terms and its equation to health contributes significantly to a broader quest for what salvation entails. Since it is eminent that healing - a replicate of salvation creates an impression beyond just the absence of sickness but extends to the wellness or wholeness of other facets of life, so is salvation.

Two facts relating to this idea of wholeness which this study hopes to expand further are reconciliation and harmony. Harmony carries the idea of holistic healing comprising of all components of life which make up a fully-lived person. Some of these elements of healing comprise of physical, spiritual, emotional, social, economic, psychological to mention but a few. The combination of those components could enable a sense of harmony. Reconciliation, on the other hand, forms another element which makes up holistic healing as earlier mentioned, yet will undergo elaboration toward establishing the intended realistic, holistic salvation. Before then, why should there be a need for a holistic interpretation of salvation.? Is a question worth pondering upon which tends to contribute to a better focus on the subject matter, namely therapeutic salvation?



## 5.6 The quest for healing

The context of this study being Africa would be of help to articulate the notion of the search for healing that goes rampant in the continent. Apart from the fact that Africa “is a continent of immense natural beauty and bounty resources through a rich diversity of cultures, languages, and religions” (Naudé, 2013:3-4). Yes, such vast availability of resources has ended up in series of “dehumanization over the last 450 years: slavery, colonialism, post-colonial misrule, involvement into the global financial system” (Naudé 2010a; 2010b:170-174), and now also “climate change.” (Naudé, 2013:4). As a result of these factors, “Africa has become a continent suffering under dehumanization.” (2013:4).

Not only is Africa enriched with bounty resources but also the abundance of diverse cultures, languages, and religions, thus contributing to the uniqueness of the continent. Besides, some of these rich resources both comprising human and natural contribute in various dimensions as elements of dehumanizing the vulnerable which in most cases are children and women. As such, the call that “we are seeking to come to terms” (Botman & Peterson, 1996:17), becomes the familiar song for many Africans which tends to “create a just and humane society” (1996:17).

One factor worth mentioning which contributes to why the call for healing/salvation relates to the rate at which inequality is underrated, especially in most African societies. Such concerns grow in ways to creating gaps in African ontology in the sense that “there seems to be no provision for the redemption of those who are cut off from the sources of life in both the community of living, living dead and nature” (Kwenda, 1999:3). If salvation means achieving a complete and fulfilled life, then many still fall by the wayside, thus would lead to calling for a “net to catch those who fall through the cracks” (Kwenda, 1999:3). Otherwise, Kwenda continues, when such actions could stand in support of the charge why “injustice in the very core of African ontology would be justified” (1999:3).

However, with the above foundation, and taking back from where we have come from, the study will, therefore, presents the possible guide toward what it proposes as therapeutic salvation. We have established at different points that various structures from which yearning for salvation emanates relate largely to injustices, sexual violence, denial of access to health being a basic right, and intentional exposure to various forms of poverty-related conditions. The need for healing from structural sin is relevant to this study, consequently, has brought to

a broader perception of salvation as not only ‘forgiveness of sin’ but also – as Mugambi sees – the rehabilitation of societal structures. Perhaps, those structural sins have created a huge sense of structural division and enmity which constitutes to a large extent, the quest for an ideal nature of salvation/healing.

### 5.6.1 Therapeutic Salvation?

From the various backgrounds already laid about the conditions leading to the quest for healing, it is here taken further when taking a critical look at the world; it becomes glaring that the human condition in sin and the terrible plight in which this fallen condition has left humanity calls for action. Within such conditions, humanity is utterly helpless when left to their wisdom and efforts of getting out from those conditions. Besides, despite the energy and the advancement of technologies to bring about a better society suitable and capable of enhancing peace and prosperity, it has always proven abortive or unsuccessful in some spheres. Hence, making human efforts incapacitated to come about the desired outcome, thus progressively promote the spread and promotion of sin through different structures that continually makes life unbearable.

It is, however, in God’s gracious plan to provide a solution to man’s problem since leaving humans on their own does not bring a solution to the present realities. Such we call ‘salvation’ or soteriology in Christian theology as already defined elsewhere in the study. However, we could also recall that it comprises the total work of God, whereby He seeks to save man from the ruin, doom, and power of sin and grants upon him the wealth of His grace encompassing eternal life, provision for abundant life now, and eternal glory (Ibid). This salvation being all encompassing, “has to do with wholeness” and to “harmony with God, other human lives, and with the rest of the creation” (Ibid). For it is in the plan of God that he “wants us to be whole” (Gowan, 2004:15).

So, the reality that God decided to save humanity from sin, and the continual presence with this same humanity present the taste of the unending love for this good creation. Moreso, since “man is created with limitations, illness is part of his existence” (Westermann, 1972:10). Seeing that the said limitation of humanity could not guarantee its liberation, and since “healing is part of the activity of the Creator” (1972:10) thus, “recognizes the human need to be far more than what creation can offer” (Gaiser, 1996:299).

To that end, seeing God's total interest in creation and the dilemma which creation finds itself includes more than the disobedience by sinning against God but more, the distortion of relationship amongst the creation themselves against each other. As such, the effort to reconciling humanity to God and to itself stands, which "recognizes a distance between the human and God, the reality of alienation between human and God and between human and human" (Gaiser, 1996:299). For it is such recognition that "announces God's intervention in the world to overcome this alienation" (1996:299). For if there is disharmony of any sort, the realization of wholeness would not prevail, and therefore, one becomes "wholly preoccupied with it until restoration comes" (Hiltner, 2011:170). Such conditions tend to disrupt the peaceful coexistence of not only the subject as an entity but also with those they mingle with, thus characterizes what nature of deliverance needed to bring about healing to such concerns.

The conditions which call for healing varies significantly so much that desiring freedom becomes intensive such that it "builds on human nature a drive toward wholeness" (Peters, 1991:303). Such quests arise in contexts of deprivation or destruction that threatens the well-being and so has resulted to why "our desires for wholeness becomes vivid and takes on it is redemptive or transformative qualities" (1991:303). Additionally, various conflicts both with self and with others also insinuate this quest for wholeness such that Martin Marty quoted in Peters calls "wholeness hunger" (1991:303), and so has become "a consuming goal" (1991:303) for humanity.

As noted earlier, various factors some of which include alienation between humanity and the divine, and humanity themselves have created several walls of hostilities. Looking also at why there is 'wholeness hunger,' it implies a signal that "we have had enough of this divisiveness and that we want to put things back together again" (1991:303). The concept of wholeness, however, tends to "provide a conceptual vehicle" (1991:304), capable of bridging the gap that exists. Such medium though principally relies on God and his relation to creation, yet "requires the direct, wholehearted and continuous engagement of those who believe in God's revelation in Christ" (Potter, 1981:338).

With these highlights in mind, the idea of therapeutic salvation which this study hopes to propose become worthy of mention here. Yes, the understanding that various ailments that have resulted to routine calling for wholeness vary considerably such that the model of healing befits the context. Moreso, the humanity's failure to meeting up with God's standard, has resulted to alienation from God and themselves, and despite the salvation through God's divine plan,

humanity still device oppressive measures that promote separation with itself. It is with this in mind that the ongoing study takes to explore the doctrines of reconciliation, transformation, and empowerment as suggestive models to bring about the intended healing.

### **5.6.2 Towards a Holistic Salvation**

Enabling a good grasp of what a comprehensive vision of salvation entails which this study hopes to propose, it is important to identify the nexus between the concepts of health and salvation that would ensure holistic healing. The point is toward identifying various wounds calling for healing which is multidimensional, with some not necessarily in need for therapies from medical science only but, from other dimensions. The essence which is to bring about healing in various facets of human existence, thus the identification of therapeutic concept which takes center stage below.

### **5.7 Reconciliation, Transformation, and Empowerment: Models for Holistic Salvation?**

The idea of reconciliation could be said to have initiated by Godself. The narratives of creation indicate the authentication of the Creator and the uniqueness of the created stating how incredible it looked.<sup>72</sup> Not long from such endorsements, the once called good creation became corrupted such that the Creator became displeased with the created attitude. Thus we could suggest as the first stage of alienation. The creation, however, was not only alienated with the Creator, but with fellow creations as well such that division and rebellion both to God the Creator, and with fellow creation began.<sup>73</sup> Such rebellion involving making attempts using human wisdom vying to know the dwelling of God the Creator resulted to diffusing the tongues that brought about the spread to other parts of the world. Hence, led to what in the contemporary times could be called the beginning of ethnic differences – a phenomenon that stands to disintegrate many societies.

The modern times, however, does not show any differences from what the earlier creation, as they sought to and indeed rebelled against the Creator with many divisive agitations. Similarly to our times, "the insurgency of ethnic claims to sovereignty and the migration of peoples in

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<sup>72</sup> See Genesis 1 & 2

<sup>73</sup> Read also from Genesis 4ff

search of better economic conditions" (Schreiter, 1992:7), has become amongst other things what defines the contexts we live. Such thoughts are coming up when "we think of the human society in global terms" (1992:7), and yet there are fewer concerns about people with various struggles around us. It is within such conditions that one finds a significant level of disharmony which frequently results into what this study calls ill- health - either regarding the relationship or otherwise. For it is evident with the broader view of salvation that, it is "not everyone who needs 'salvation' requires a dramatic conversion experience" (Gowan, 2004:14) since that has often defined the concept of salvation. Hence, the call for reconciliation could become a possibility or another model to bring about salvation.

### 5.7.1 Reconciliation?

In his book 'The unique Christ for salvation,' Turaki's<sup>74</sup> Affirmation of the centrality of the cross of Christ states that "our Lord Jesus Christ and His cross forms the focus and the center of reconciliation, redemption, restoration, and salvation." (2001:166). Not only is the cross being the center, Turaki says, "the cross of Christ is both the signet and symbol of reconciliation between man and God, between God and nature and between man and man and nature." (2001:166). It is on this note he opines further what he calls "articles of salvation" (2001:167) which he says are "reconciliation, peace, justice, love, grace, and forgiveness become manifest and effectual in the world" (2001:166).

As stated earlier above about the condition which God's good creation subjected itself into that brought to rebellion against its Creator, so has the contemporary society. For not only does it include violence against the Creator but also to fellow creation as it is a widespread phenomenon. In Africa for instance, concerns such as hunger and poverty attribute to "violence against human beings" (Schreiter 1992:9). What is said to have led to such scenario relates to "changes in government" (1992:9) that bring about "political boundaries that are cutting through ethnic territories, dividing some groups and throwing them together with long-standing enemies" (1992:9). The result of such changes have not contributed to the unity of Africans – as possible as might be the intention- but has led to the identification of "ways that Africa has been depleted of human resources and thus has its development hindered" (1992:9).

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<sup>74</sup> Yusufu Turaki is a professor of Theology and Social Ethics. He teaches theology and social ethics at the Jos ECWA Theological Seminary (JETS) in Nigeria since 1980.

The reality involving the depletion of resources which could contribute to the emancipation of the ‘hunger and poverty’ seen above on the one hand and ‘hindrance to development’ on the other has been tragic. For instance, one of those relates to “ethnic rivalries regularly boiling over into civil wars that waste the precious human resources” (1992:9). This wasting of human resources also relates to various acts of subjection and dehumanization of fellow creation in Africa, particularly on women and children, the norm which is promoted by what we have accredited to patriarchal influence.

Such realities call for the medium through which the already -created boundaries could come to closure, thus the introduction of the concept of reconciliation. The term reconciliation says, Kärkkäinen relates to “healing and bringing together broken relationships” (2013:364). The healing which comes up through reconciliation refers to the holistic notion that this study lays claim to promote. For Kärkkäinen, reconciliation

Has the potential of being the most inclusive and comprehensive, encompassing ideas such as ‘cosmic reconciliation,’ shalom (peace), the meaning of the cross, the psychological effects of conversion, the work of the Holy Spirit, the overcoming of barricades between Christians. The work of the Church in the world, peacemaking, movements toward ethnic reconciliation and the regeneration of ecological stabilities between humanity and its natural environment. (2013:364).

Turaki also alludes to this broad meaning definition of reconciliation. Taking his stance from the centrality of the cross of Christ he adds, “it is the basis of God’s willingness to make peace with the rebellious humanity and to restore fellowship with man and also to restore His fallen creation” (2001:168). So, affirms further that, “the cross of Christ is the foundation of salvation and redemption, repentance and forgiveness, peace, love, grace, justice and reconciliation” (2001:168).

From the above definitions, reconciliation forms the nexus between different spheres, especially relating to distorted relationships and thus becoming a model which could bring about bridging such gaps. The effect of distorted relationship amongst other things forms an aspect of ill health. Such dispositions gain affirmation through the acknowledgment that “health is related to all the external social forces in which one lives” (Schmitt, 1994:176). As such, the realization that “health is relational” (1994:176) would enable communities the chances of unification, thus an affirmation that “healing also comes from others” (1994:176). Another form of ill health that is resulting in this kind of healing includes “the loss of community through the loss of cultural consensus” (1994:177).

With the above survey in mind, it is evident to depict that reconciliation could have a significant role to salvage some of the concerns already ascribed as responsible for the disharmony within most African societies. More so, this also involves that the situations should call for the need of salvation of that sort, since “Salvation is, first and foremost, an ontological event in our human nature that inaugurates the possibility of unobstructed communion with God” (Guroian, 2004:312) even with fellow humans as well. However, since “sin is an offense against God, but the state of sin is an illness that mortally weakens the patient” (2004:314), it suffices that the ‘weakening of the patient’ becomes an attainment of disharmony. With all these in mind and the anticipation that reconciliation is a requirement to healing the wounds of distortion in relationships, yet “unless we believe that reconciliation is possible, then there would be no cause to pursue it” (DeYoung, 1997:62). Now we let us take a look at what characterizes reconciliation that makes it a prerequisite for healing.

### 5.7.2 Reconciled?

Here we will explore the reality therein reconciliation. With these in mind, few of the characteristics of reconciliation worth describing, and to help us in this exploration, the work of DeYoung<sup>75</sup> in his book<sup>76</sup> would serve as our guide.

In this book, DeYoung titled a chapter, ‘A reconciliation mindset’ where he outlines some features of reconciliation which might be of tremendous contribution to the ongoing study. So, he says, “reconciliation is possible, and it begins with self-examination; it is holistic and consistent; it requires a persistent resolve which centers in relationships” (1997:62). These are the features necessary for outlining in the current discussion on reconciliation as they might serve to provide a wider coverage to the subject matter.

Firstly, the idea of holistic salvation that this study portrays stands to apply in different spheres of engagement and calls for sensitivity into any discussion of that sort, especially having to do with human well-being. To that end, reconciliation as a concept defined in relational terms also calls for a holistic approach where “it must be understood and practiced broadly” (DeYoung, 1997:62). Such idea of the broadness comes with the wide-ranging elements responsible for calling in reconciliation which ought to include as much as possible, the factors responsible for

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<sup>75</sup> Curtiss Paul DeYoung is an Associate Professor of Reconciliation Studies at the College in St. Paul, Minnesota.

<sup>76</sup> Reconciliation: Our Greatest Challenge – Our Only Hope.

distorting relationships. For instance, “individuals who struggle for gender equality but ignore class dynamics are limiting their potential to create substantive change” (1997:65). Such struggle from the above analysis, do not portray a holistic approach to reconciliation. A comprehensive approach to reconciliation does not only discusses different elements involved but also suggests an absolute attempt to see what is realistic in one context as it is in another context. That keeps us informed that holistic approach to reconciliation “allows the issues that divide us to be considered together” (1997:65).

Secondly, reconciliation does not only have to be holistic but that it centers in relationships as already established above. As a matter of relationship, it involves more than just words but actions, such that “reconciliation does not occur instantaneously because we preach it, discuss it, or write books about it” (1997:69). Instead, DeYoung says, “reconciliation is accomplished when we live it out about each other” (1997:69) and such kinds of relationship, he observes “is not negotiable” (1997:71). Thus, would enhance a continual harmonious living between the once alienated with themselves.

Summarizing the discussions on reconciliation, it is apparent that we emphasize the multi-dimensionality of the subject matter. It is a concept that is understood to pertain relationships, amongst other forms. In one way, reconciliation arises due to the failure recorded against humanity which brought about alienation with God, whereas that same cause also results in the alienation therein human relation to themselves. However, by the cross, the relationships have been built up, thus enabling “God’s peace, grace, forgiveness, and love” as virtues are an affirmation that “man is reconciled to his Maker” (2001:169), and so there be no alienation with God any longer.

However, becoming reconciled with God does not only yield to the establishment of the said virtues but also “makes sudden changes in life” (Gowan, 2004:15). For just as it is in the healing process of any illness for instance, that comes with “dramatic improvements in our physical condition” (Gowan, 2004:15), so is reconciliation. So, the changes that reconciliation enhances do not only build up walls that are broken but also shows that “reconciliation is not just restoration, but it brings us to a place where we have not been before” (Schreiter, 1992:60). It is to that end that “reconciliation becomes a way of life and not just a set of discrete tasks to be performed” (1992:60). Hence, guaranteeing an attainment where “a reconciled person and a reconciled community live differently from the way they had done before they encountered violence and oppression” (1992:60).



In the context of this study, it is indeed worthy of mention that oppression, violence and their likes have created avenues where distortions of relationships emerged. These channels as we have seen elsewhere above, operate through the usage of some authority by the oppressors. However, just as the power of Jesus' cross "reveals the lie of the oppressors" (Schreiter, 1992:61) it has the same power able to break the yolk of oppression in contemporary times, and in Africa precisely. The power of reconciliation exists "where those who are weak, broken, and oppressed show the way to those who had wielded power" (1992:61). To this end we could say, the power of reconciliation is that which does not only heal the broken relationships but does transform as well.

### 5.7.3 Transformation

Since there is variation in what constitutes the needs of humanity, there also seems to exist different ways of preferring attempted solutions as well. For instance, when talking about why Jesus Christ had to come and die for the sin of humanity, we quickly remember that it was because of alienation with God which sin has created. However, in recent times, various cries for liberation from different forms of alienation abound so much that, what calls for liberation in one context differs from the other. As already described elsewhere in the study, some reasons for alienation have included societal, psychological, emotional, spiritual, to mention but a few, hence, contribute to the distortion of the well-being of individuals. To this end comes the necessity of applying different models to addressing the various concerns, and one of which to discuss here is transformation.

Among the said list above, the transformation could apply in instances where the first model already suggested namely reconciliation has taken precedence such that an attainment of a new phase of self-worth emerges. For example, as it is when one first encounter Christ, the life after that comes with great excitements such that the feeling of God's peace dominates the individual. Thus echoing the words in the letter to the Romans<sup>77</sup> Where Paul admonishes on the renewal of the mind. To that Charry takes it further to say "careful development or leading of the mind should result in improved character" (1997:19). However, how could there be the development of character in the context such as in Africa where chances for developing other members of the society – in most cases the most vulnerable have some restrictions.?

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<sup>77</sup> Romans 12:1

Responding to such queries, Charry declares that "development of character will not happen without knowledge" (1997:19).

As the case relating to denial of access to women in most instances to obtaining knowledge which Charry observed above to guarantee the development of character, has put them under the subjection of patriarchal structures. Perhaps it equally denies them the possibilities of the renewal of minds. It would become clear that unless those oppressive dominant structures cease to exist that the "enablement of a 'hospitable self,' whose way of relating across boundaries is not that of domination but peace" (Ford, 1999:183) would then emerge. A life which comprises of "having all the fullness of life and meaning" (Rushdoony, 1983:79) within which peace and not domination abounds, and the development of character that results from the renewal of mind ensures.

The kind of transformation we try to portray here relates to "mental transformation" (Charray, 1997:4), which she says is "required for excellent living" (1997:4). What sort of excellence could this form of transformation lead to.? An attempt to answering that question would retake us to what makes up the context of this study, namely African prosperity gospel and salvation. It has been stated earlier in the study on the focus of prosperity gospel and concerning their understanding of the salvation of an individual which has to do with evidence one presents. Here the interest is not to critique that notion *per se* but to emphasize on what the idea of 'excellent living' entails. To state it clearly and succinctly, the living which enhances the development of an individual that happens via the renewal of minds and not to physical transformation only -though as necessary as it is- is that which encompasses all other facets of life.

To that end, an attempted conclusion could emerge by establishing the nexus between the renewal of minds and transformation which leads to development. Taking from the words of Apostle Paul to the Romans ....'be transformed by the renewing of your minds;' and the words of Niebuhr "calling for a Christianity that would not conform to the world but transforms it" (Stassen, Yeager & Yoder, 1996:129). From their thoughts, we could also have a base. With that focus in mind we could opt to say, without the renewal of minds, then the development of character which enhances shaping of certain ideologies becomes difficult.

Furthermore, a survey through Christian history could serve well in giving us the context at which transformation was made possible. For instance, a short journey through the world of

the first century which was full of, “distrust, lovelessness, and hopelessness of man about God” (Niebuhr, 1951:191). To that context, Jesus willingly accepted to “heal the most stubborn and virulent human disease, the phthisis of the spirit and forgives the most hidden and proliferous sin” (1951:191). Perhaps for Niebuhr, he agonized over, “racism, regionalism, nationalism, and classism that had separated the Church” (Stassen et al., 1996:129). Such he saw as the shift in the intended vision of the Church which was to “make the kingdom of this world transformed into the kingdom of our Lord” (1996:130). Instead, the reverse which includes “racial, class, national, and regional divisions” (1996:130) had become the norm.

#### 5.7.4 Empowerment

The third hypothetical notion of holistic salvation could make sense out of, from the previous two already outlined namely, reconciliation and transformation. It is glaring that the emphasis has to do with God's grace in the life of an individual to restore the damages this good creation has undergone through the activities of humanity. It also connotes the essential difference between the traditional understanding of healing that modern medicine provides but more of a holistic rehabilitation.

The term empowerment has a variety of meanings with each depending on the context of usage. Perhaps it has the connotation as “a very misunderstood concept” (Titi & Singh, 1995:31). Discourses on empowerment do not, however, mean that there cannot be clear to the misunderstanding of the term. To this end, an excellent grasp of the word empowerment would require certain clarifications of certain facts, some of which including the identification of who is to empower who, and what would empowerment result too.

Debates on empowerment abound from various contexts including nature itself<sup>78</sup> but more than that, and above all, human beings cry for empowerment from different experiences as well. On the side of humanity, however, though the study has so far centered on the domination of women through various patriarchal structures, yet it is crucial to note that they are not the only

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<sup>78</sup> Human activities do not only affect the peace of other human beings but nature as well. This has gone to a point where “nature has been disempowered, robbed of its internal dynamism and its regenerative capacity” (Titi & Singh, 1995:34). The result of which is the development of various theologies of liberation that are not only gear toward human beings but creation as well. These theologies including particularly ‘ecological theology’ whose goal amongst other things is the propagation of the salvation of creation from human activities. Some of the proponents of this theology including Conradie who emphasizes on the salvation of creation; and Moltmann whose emphasis is on the hope for creation.

set of humankind that yearns for empowerment. As such it is interesting to note that any “talk about ‘empowerment’ must recognize that more candidates are calling for empowerment than one” (Titi & Singh, 1995:34). Meanwhile, in this same manner which get victimized of different oppressive paradigms so also do the “children, the disabled, the ethnic or racial minorities are among those with legitimate claims to empowerment” (1995:34).

However, to be more specific here would require that we state one of the reasons why the quest for empowerment is legitimate to whichever party named above. Responding to this Afshar declares the fact that “where women are concerned, the issues of war and peace and violence never leave the stage” (1998:3). Such circumstances she always sees resulting in women because such conditions distort what constitutes their well-being as such, their justification for calling for empowerment. Perhaps, violence distorts the peace, and so for any empowerment to make a meaningful impact in the lives of the one to be empowered, “it must enable them who are most affected to find ways of articulating the pain and accommodate the slow process of healing” (Afshar, 1998:3).

Given those mentioned above, it would serve well to aim at attempting a working definition of empowerment while being reminded about the variation therein meaning in various contexts. Following that hypothesis, Sykes (1987) quoted in Sofield sees the verb ‘empower’ to mean “to authorize, license; give power to; make able; enable; to commission” (2003:79). The given definition seems sufficient to fit into the context of the ongoing study as well. For instance, in the academia, when the need arises to empower teachers, the desiring outcome could be toward improving the quality of their performances through their newly acquired skills, thus the enhancement of their delivery capacities. So while considering similar analogy into the ongoing study and recalling that women who form a significant aspect of it do not have access to western education, thus could become a major prerequisite for empowerment. The empowerment of females in that circumstance would include their enabling to the acquisition of quality education. The essence of this would be the enhancement of their mental state which could give them the voice from the knowledge acquired.

Secondly, in the case of poverty, which is another factor already outlined above where women and perhaps the most vulnerable are often at the receiving end, also arises. Since poverty in a holistic sense of the term includes the denial of essential elements of livelihood, it ought to call for some concerns. Some forms of poverty could simply be loneliness, whose cure would be the availability of others around with arms of love. Yes, but the exposure to various forms of

poverty has a way of creating chances which enhance unbearable situations in the lives of the individual. For instance, the rampant cases of sexual violence in most African streets as in others all over the globe resulting from poverty. In such situations, the victims some of who in the effort of making a living out of what they do, end up endangering their lives and so becoming victims of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), a system which results to continuity in the poverty line. The empowerment to such persons would be the enhancement of “person’s economic well-being” (Fuchs, 1988:77). Such well-being as already discussed above would here not only hold to the acquisition of excess wealth but would include to a large extent, the development of strategies to engaging these victims which could enhance their self-worth. In other words, the economic well-being attainment here could also be an empowerment model that sustains the progress of the poor. Titi & Singh added further,

It means giving people and communities the right capacity to cope with the changing environment. As societies and communities strive to enter the transition towards sustainable partners of development which includes the capacity for social awareness, higher levels of social and economic participation, and the utilization of new insights on self-renewal (1995:178).

In summary of the proposed models for therapeutic salvation thus far, it is obvious that they try to make emphasis each on the wellness or rather, the well-being of human beings. Yes, the said models and what we have observed from them have made a considerable contribution toward the well-being which could guarantee to flourish which could have had some limitations within Christian theological circles. The restriction which comes from the perception and application of the two concepts namely, well-being and human flourishing. The result of which this study tries to make a critique of the two terms for proper and wider understanding.

So, to make the clarification of the different views therein well-being and human flourishing would require an engagement of other voices that have seen the concepts from various perspectives.

## **5.8 Critiquing Well-Being and Human Flourishing? Moltmann and Kelsey**

Discussions on well-being and flourishing have taken preference thus far in this study, such that, the two are seen as the goal of salvation, solely. Yes, the focus of salvation expects to center on the two concepts, namely well-being and flourishing respectively but, to what extent are they taken from, and how are they attainable.? To answer the above question, we shall be considering the thoughts of two theologians that have made considerable efforts to explain how

the concepts of well-being and flourishing are understood. These Theologians are respectively, Jürgen Moltmann who argues about the inappropriateness of equating human health to well-being (Moltmann, 1993a:273). While David Kelsey, on the other hand, makes emphasis on the fact that human flourishing should not be taken as if it the power to people to make themselves flourish, instead, he lays concern from a theocentric perspective. These two will be studied as we try to note their critique of the two concepts.

### 5.8.1 Jürgen Moltmann and Being 'Healthy.'

In his book 'God in creation,' Moltmann affirms the criticality therein health and sickness in the contemporary society which he describes as "current at the present day" (1993a:270). As current this could be, it is equally not a new concept because it has over centuries been a concern which also might result in different ways of understanding what health and sickness entail. Of the existence of health and sickness in the society, it suffices to have led to many discourses which present various meaning to what it means to be healthy. One of which relates to describing health as "the system of received values in the society" (1993a:270). With that, Moltmann states the possible danger therein such meaning of health that he says "these ideas of health are not necessarily healthy in themselves" (1993a:271), and that "they can also alienate the human body and make it sick" (1993a:271). Thus he opines "we cannot measure health merely against the system of values of the particular society" (1993a:271)

To avoid conceptualizing health in that manner, Moltmann thus says health must be defined in several different dimensions such that it becomes conducive to the life of human beings (1993a:271). For health to include different dimensions says Moltmann, it does not involve the human person only but covers between "individual and society, society and nature, past and future, immanence and transcendence." (1993a:271). Taking his bearing from the World Health Organization's definition of health<sup>79</sup>, Moltmann calls it a maximum definition which presents health as an ideal (1993a:271). That definition of health to Moltmann relates to its encompassing the health of both individuals and the societies which they live. It is not an 'either' 'or,' but a both comprehensive understanding. Such inclusion counteracts an understanding of health as "a person's capacity for work and enjoyment" (1993a:271), which

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<sup>79</sup> World Health Organization defines health as quoted in Moltmann (1993a:271), that Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being, not merely the absence of sickness and handicaps.

Moltmann ascribes as “simplistic but very general that is in line with industrial society” (1993a:271).

However, the above comprehensive definition of health does not satisfy what Moltmann sees and accepts to be the ideal description of health. Because to him, such definition presents a generalize conceptualization which would mean that, to be healthy “is to be a person in the fullest sense of the word” (1993a:272). So, what Moltmann identifies in the above definition of health is that it “talks only about illness and infirmity, and not about death” (1993a:274). Thus comes the critique of that understanding of health

Moltmann, first of all, defines health in the following ways. Firstly, he sees health as ‘an objectively ascertainable state of the human being’s physical, mental and social well-being.’ Secondly, he sees health as ‘a subjectively ascertainable attitude on the part of the person concerned to his fluctuating condition.’ Getting these two definitions together, Moltmann argues that “health is the term for the process of adaptation. The capacity to acclimate to a changing milieu, to become older, to recover one’s health, to suffer, to await death in peace” (1993a:273). In other words, he notes, “health is the ability to cope with pain, sickness and death autonomously and not only the absence of malfunctionings but the strength to live with them” (1993a:273). In this case, Moltmann concludes that “health is not, either, a state of general well-being; it is ‘the strength to be human’” (1993a:273). This strength to be human for Moltmann does not depend only on the attainment of health as such instead, “is displayed in the person’s capacity for happiness and suffering, in his acceptance of life’s joy and the grief of death” (1993a:273).

Furthermore, the affirmation that health should involve the capacity of one to accept various conditions being them favorable or not is an effort to avoidance of the fact that “being human is equated with being healthy” (1993a:273). For Moltmann, such connotations would lead to “the suppression of illness such that the sick are pushed out of the life of society and kept out of the public eye” (1993a:273). Moreover, when that occurs he argues, it leads to “robbing the human being of the true strength of his humanity” (1993a:273). Consequently, when health is seen as ‘the strength to be human’ as Moltmann suggests, then we reach a point of agreement where “we make being human more important than the state of being healthy” (1993a:273). Of that understanding is the inclusion of health and sickness and living and dying as Moltmann declares as the solid definition of what it means to be human.



So, for Moltmann, any understanding of health dichotomized from sickness, living and dying, and the ability of one to cope with either of the two conditions, he describes such definition of health as “illusory” (1993a:274). Moreso, just as health is viewed to include different dimensions, so should sickness, such that it is the condition of being sick but as Moltmann says “the sick person himself” (1993a:274). Besides, many factors are responsible for the various sickness that call for healing, and yes, would have to be treated as such, but for the whole person, Moltmann concludes the various illnesses affect in some ways which call for seeing the whole person.<sup>80</sup>

### 5.8.2 David H. Kelsey and Human Flourishing

The desire to fulfilling life goals such as “happiness, life satisfaction, and subject of well-being has often been regarded as the fulfillment of various goals” (Cohen & Johnson, 2008:3). Such desires understood in different Christian communities as what constitutes human flourishing. Perhaps, it is taken to “involve having meaningful social relationships, meaning in life, and the achievement of personal goals” (Cohen & Johnson, 2008:3). As part of fulfilling life goals taken to be human flourishing, it holds to including the fact that “human flourishing stands for the life that is lived well, the life that goes well, and the life that feels right” (Volf, 2015: ix). These summarize the essence of human flourishing in which some theologians see it as necessary to propound a theology of flourishing that is in line with the holistic view of salvation. A theology built on the model of flourishing says Jantzen, is one whose spirituality is holistic rather than privatized, subjugated spirituality so characteristic of contemporary Christianity (1996:75).

Such understanding as would be discussed in details below provides herewith what David Kelsey stands to make a clarification from a theocentric point of view. Besides, such seemingly loosed quest for humanity whose attainment defines well-being is an active norm within academic Christian theology as much as it is within the traditional understanding of what constitutes human well-being often equated as human flourishing. To the point that human

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<sup>80</sup> Moltmann (1993a:274-275) classifies four ways which sickness affect the wholeness of a person. Firstly, ‘in his relationship with himself.’ In this state, Moltmann sees an individual experiencing him/herself in a new way where life becomes anew. Secondly, ‘in his life history.’ This fact Moltmann describes as capable of affecting the all the aspirations one has to life which include burying hopes. Thirdly, ‘in his social relationships.’ Here Moltmann attests that to be ill means a disturbance of social relationships, loss of attention, the experience of isolation. Fourthly, ‘in his relationship to the transcendent sphere.’



flourishing is measured based on the quality of life, one lives – here such quality as a real life. Hence, human flourishing saw as good life “consists not merely in succeeding in one or another endeavor we undertake, but in living into our human and personal fullness” (Volf, 2015: ix). It is to this end that Kelsey speaks to deconstruct such ideas while drawing the attention to the relationship therein between God and the world as a whole, and humanity in particular, as it stands.

On human flourishing, Kelsey starts from analyzing what Christian theology holds as regards to understanding the concept as if it constitutes human efforts to bring about the flourishing of others. Such a short and brief hypothesis holds when Kelsey observes that “Christians’ magnify God and God’s power and dominion” (2008:1). However, despite the powerfulness of God, humanity still play a significant place in God’s agenda because though once alienated through sin, yet have been reconciled through the power of the cross. Thus for Kelsey, “minimizing human beings, making them small, weak, and servile” (2008:1). This for Kelsey creates a dichotomy therein relationship between God and the reconciled humanity. So, reducing human beings as above is a reduction of the value which humanity has to God namely, “anything but flourishing” (2008:1).

However, human flourishing for Kelsey in a proper sense of the concept is "inseparable from God's activities relating to human creatures such that their flourishing is always dependent upon God" (2008:1). Such understanding which encompasses the ‘expression of God's glory,’ which echoes the Psalmist's portrayal of God's creation dynamic response to the Creator. Such understanding of human flourishing for Kelsey comes from the earlier point of minimizing human beings into nothing else but flourishing. The previous notion, however, is an "assumption that people's powers are maximized when people flourish" (2008:1). However, the debate which Kelsey establishes here gears to "show human flourishing correlates with, rather than excludes an appropriately understanding of God's power in activities relating to people" (2008:1). Put simply; Kelsey opts to outline the Nexus therein human flourishing as ultimately dependent upon God's relating and not solely a human-based idea.

Using a practical term in his description of flourishing, Kelsey chooses the word ‘blossom,’ which he arrives at two meanings. Firstly, from the theological point of view, the term he says “manifest the type of beauty of which a given life is capable of God’s relating to it” (2008:2). Secondly, a metaphorical sense of the word blossom he sees it “to be on the way to providing both fruit and seed on which a subsequent generation’s life may depend” (2008:2). These two

ways of seeing the word ‘blossom,’ Kelsey takes the following meaning – metaphorical, saying it “characterizes a particular type of human life” (2008:2), which could also suggest “maximum good health” (2008:3).

Remembering that health has for in this study refer to encompasses all facets of life and not exclusively an absence of sickness. The same holistic view of health we have also critiqued in Moltmann’s view above who disagree with the idea of human health as solely a state of well-being. Such concept of health Kelsey calls it “a problematic metaphor” (2008:3). Looking as such comes from the metaphorical definition of ‘Blossom’ above which he sees as problematic he rather chooses to use the phrase ‘to thrive’ (2008:3), that he opines “theologically appropriate” (2008:3).

Despite its theological correctness, Kelsey also notices that it is problematic in the metaphorical sense. Hence, he rather opts to use the phrase neither ‘to thrive’ from a theological perspective which means “to flourish” as “to have oneself in hand,” nor using the metaphorical sense meaning “to grow luxuriantly” and “to prosper” (2008:3). These two perceptions of the phrase ‘to thrive’ Kelsey chooses to exclude in his analysis of human flourishing for two reasons. Firstly, the theological meaning he says “unqualifiedly re-introduces health as a metaphor” (2008:3). Secondly, the metaphorical sense of the phrase as “it inappropriately introduces wealth and achievement as metaphors definitive of human flourishing” (2008:3). He, however, takes to explore people as “living psychosomatic whole that typically exhibits a distinctive, very complex array of interrelated capacities and powers, each of which admits of different degrees from one human being to another” (2008:3).

He then begins the exploration by firstly, looking at what he calls some assumptions about God since he has established that human flourishing has to do with God’s relating to creation. A survey on God’s attributes enabled Kelsey to present why it is possible that relating to people becomes possible despite their fallen nature. He uses the fact that God is ‘Christocentric’ that he sees concerns Christian claims that “God who relates to creating human beings also relates to them to draw them to eschatological consummation. Moreover, even when they are estranged, he says, are reconciled back to Godself (2008:3). The another assumption he uses relates to the Trinitarian understanding of God that he sees relating to human beings. The relation of the Triune Kelsey sees as “logically distinguishable from one another, irreducible to one another, and ordered to one another” (2008:4). For him, “God relates to creating all that is not God,” “relates to drawing all that is not God to an eschatological consummation,” “relates

to reconciling it to God if it is estranged from God” (2008:4). These senses of assumptions about God Kelsey see as enabling God to relate to human beings, thus becomes the base for human flourishing.

In his search for human flourishing as well-being, however, Kelsey takes it from the relation already established above and views it from two perspectives, namely ‘the popular piety’ and ‘Academic theology’ (2008:8). These Kelsey says, “see human flourishing as well-being” (2008:8) such that they take human flourishing as “human beings’ healthiest relationship to fellow beings, to shared contexts, and to themselves” (2008:8). So taking from the first perspective, namely popular piety, whose view of human well-being Kelsey says include “human being that is ‘happy’ and ‘healthy,’ ‘self-fulfilled’ or ‘self-realized,’ or ‘fully actualized’ (2008:9). This Kelsey sees as acceptable as human flourishing in culturally Christian understanding. The second perception on the other hand which is the academic theological view, Kelsey sees that human flourishing here is conceived to relate to “human subject’s relating to itself by an interior subjective act” (2008:9). This view Kelsey says, sights well-being on the model of health (2008:14). Perhaps, humanity has taken God’s intention to solely mean the “well-being-as-overall-health” (2008:14). Such views Kelsey sees as problematic as well, especially that it has to do with the overall health of an individual as human flourishing. To this problematic notion, Kelsey relents to accept that “health defines human well-being” (2008:14) though equally holds that “well-being as health forms part of the theological account of human flourishing” (2008:14).

Kelsey again finds it more problematic when "human flourishing as human well-being is understood as health" (2008:14) because, for him, such is a depiction that human flourishing excludes any form of ill-health. Besides, if we can recall, we have earlier attempted to see being healthy as one's ability to live with, and cope with illness, and not necessarily the absence of ill-health. So, here, Kelsey attempts to use two scenarios to explain the extent of which human flourishing is understood as either or not healthy. Firstly, is the category that construes humanity's various relations which he says, "well-being perceived as health lies in the dynamics of the human being's different types of relationship to themselves, to fellow creatures, and to the lived worlds they share" (2008:14). That he holds due to the emphasis which humanity put regarding health, taking as well-being which centers on the smoothness therein relationships they exhibit. Secondly, is the notion of a ‘theocentric account of human flourishing,’ which Kelsey sees as that which "lies in the dynamics of human being's relations to God and God's

relations with them" (2008:14). It is within this frame of theocentric account that Kelsey sees "God's relations to human beings and their relationship to God are the larger contexts within which the meaning of their relations to themselves, fellow creatures, and their shared lived worlds are defined, and their significance assessed" (2008:14).

The point which Kelsey is making from the theocentric affirmation of human flourishing is to disproof several assumptions. One of such is the account that holds in academic theology which tries to equate human flourishing to health. Kelsey, however, speaking from the theocentric perspective, disagrees to some degree with "identifying suffering as a decisive criterion of a person's non-flourishing" (2008:15). Though being aware that non-flourishing life is possible in the context of suffering and sickness yet, he is of the opinion that they are not "a necessary condition for any human flourishing theoretically understood" (2008:15). So, for Kelsey, his theocentric connotation of human flourishing rely solely on "in human beings' God relation" (2008:19). Whereas human flourishing understood as various kinds of 'health' he says "lie in human being's relation to themselves, fellow creatures, and to their shared social and natural contexts" (2008:18). It is to this clarifying contrast between a concept of human flourishing depending on health and that which depends on the theocentric perspective that Kelsey arrives to say "the criteria of what counts as human flourishing are multiple and complexly interrelated when it is understood the-centrally" (2008:19). Hence, the appropriation of two kinds of relation Kelsey calls types A and B respectively.

Kelsey formulates these two broad concepts of relation to enhancing on his quest for theocentric perspective on human flourishing. The first view he calls Type A signifies "a flourishing in virtue of God's relating to human beings" (2008:20) and the Type B conception he says is "by human beings' appropriate responsive relating to God" (2008:20). Here it is glaring that the one responsible for the flourishing of others – say God and the object of the flourishing – say humanity has both concerted contributions. Theocentrically Kelsey says God relates to human beings – we see as God's aspect of the relationship that he calls type A, while humanity is also having a role to play as they appropriately become responsive to this relating relationship.

Above all these forms of relating, Kelsey summarizes the various components therein. In the type A human flourishing, for instance, he declares it to involve "flourishing in virtue of God's relating to creating, in virtue of God's relating to drawing to eschatological consummation, and in virtue of God's relating to reconcile" (2008:20). While on his analysis of the second type of

relation, Kelsey observes it carries same components as in the previous type An above but with a slight distinction. The variation he sets here relates to the substitution of the three components namely, relation to creating, to draw to eschatological consummation, and to reconcile to other essential elements. These new terms suggest taking the place of the former involve human relating in response to God's. Hence, he says "human flourishing in faith, in hope, and in love" (2008:22). To these, he notes, what counts as the adequate responses to God's relating in which human beings flourish "lie in the details of the peculiar ways. In which God is at once 'other than' and 'intimately involved with' human beings in each of the three ways in which God relates to them in concreto" (2008:22).

## 5.9 Conclusion

The study in this section has made concerted efforts to analyze the heart of the entire journey so far. It has done a critical assessment of the various concepts involved in the study through discrete units, which has enabled proper findings to the different components of the study.

The understanding therein salvation as healing explored in the above survey sees the incorporation of different lived experiences taken to enhance dehumanization as befitting calling for salvation. Looking at it from a different framework, salvation in the context that comprises distortion of relationships would not imply the confession to acceptance of Jesus's salvation as often understood at some points but would involve reconciliation. In another scene, such instances would call for salvation which takes either the form of transforming or empowering the individuals involved. Such would have a way of building up of confidence, courage, and one's self- image, thus enabling flourishing due to the healing that might have taken place. Such salvation could also simply be the restoration from where one's self-worth is demeaned, whatsoever the cause.

How could such understanding come to play.? An attempt to answering that question would involve the actualization of the God's creation. On the one hand, to acknowledge that all creation stand to express the glory of God the Creator, while on the contrary, and most especially, seeing humanity as not only God's creation but as God's image bearers. In other words, seeing and according to the value and dignity which God has on humanity as their Creator irrespective of their statuses.

Consequently, the difficulty as regards the attainment of such understanding of the worth of the 'other' in the context where the image of God in humanity abounds. One of the reasons has

to do with the traditional norms which most societies have incorporated to define how individuals are treated. Some of such societal principles are set irrespective of their effects on the lives of the entire inhabitants, perhaps for the benefit of just a few, namely, the custodians of the principles. Since women as we have seen thus far, are regarded in some societies as ‘lesser beings,’ thus implementing whatever sort of principles which to a large extent always, affect the those whose voices are often not heard – yes women.

## Chapter 6: Summary, Recommendation, and Conclusion

### 6.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the overview of the research contained in the previous chapters and makes some highlights therein, thus providing some suggestive recommendations for further studies on therapeutic interpretations of salvation. The chapter makes a case for salvation as a social construct, such that it presents some differences and or similarities between the two conversation partners thus far namely, Mugambi and Oduyoye. Also in this chapter is contain an effort to stress some balance within the emphasis on prosperity gospel thereby seeing prosperity gospel as human flourishing.

### 6.2 Research Summary

The study thus far comprised of six (6) chapters which are summarized thus;

The first chapter presented the need for proper engagement in the study of salvation, especially as it has to do with various interpretations and understanding at different contexts with diverse experiences. Components comprising the diversification that require proper engaging have to do with a better understanding of two terms running throughout the study namely, salvation and health. These terms as explained, have similar connotations such that none goes without the other simply because of what they entail in real life situations. The articulation of these terms and their meaning holistically enhance flourishing of life -a condition where one lives and feels their self-worth as God's image bearers.

The second chapter presented an overview of African prosperity gospels, where the understanding of salvation in Pentecostal theology in general and prosperity gospel in particular, was buttressed. The study in that chapter did not promise to present all there is in prosperity gospel theology but was limited to analyzing what comprises their understanding of salvation. On that note, two components running through the prosperity gospel theology of salvation surfaces namely, wealth and health taking as evidence to one's proof of salvation. As argued in the chapter, one is seen to have achieved them to prove they are saved irrespective of the circumstances that might have hindered such attainment. In fact, even if the inability to have such statuses of health and wealth were God's divine plan they are not taking into any consideration rather than believing that, every child of God is destined to be rich and healthy.

The third chapter introduced one of the conversation partners -Jesse N.K. Mugambi- whose theological contributions plays a vital role as regarding the quest for understanding therapeutic salvation from social and structural perspective. In his research work, three components namely, salvation, reconciliation, and reconstruction were discussed concerning holistic salvation. Interestingly, his interest and contributions center on social reconstruction of societies, thus helping us to appropriate salvation as a therapeutic reality for the wholeness and flourishing of life

The fourth chapter presented the second dialogue partner -Mercy Oduyoye- who being a Feminist theologian has written extensively in promoting the self-worth of not only women but the society in its entirety. Her theological contributions serve as an essential reference for the therapeutic understanding of salvation which forms the core of this study.

The fifth chapter presented an attempt toward actualizing what makes up the study in its entirety namely, therapeutic interpretations of salvation. Three variables suggested as models for holistic salvation considered different facets of life and why such should call for salvation.

The primary research question that this thesis responded to is: How do Oduyoye and Mugambi portray salvation as healing in the presence of prosperity gospels in African contexts”?

The research question above is proven right by the interactive discussions in chapters two, three, and four respectively. Therapeutic interpretations of salvation in this study take the context African prosperity gospels which provide us space where better interaction would generate. The presence of this gospel of prosperity and their understanding of salvation relating to an achievement of an individual possess a concern. For instance, emphasis such as “God blesses those who are faithful to God with prosperous living” (Withrow, 2007:15) considered as salvation. Such understanding cuts across our contemporary world where such lives of material prosperity are celebrated irrespective of the sources of such successes while leaving those struggling for survival to thinking of devaluing themselves. Looking from what the study has suggested above, it is clear that such do not uphold to holistic salvation seeing that only a particular segment has the experience of it.

Withrow considers such drives as coming from politically and economically global trends which have gotten a place in Christian circles- prosperity gospel in particular- instead of “being attentive to social ethics and getting involved in transformative community models” (2007:15). Within such a context, a reconsideration of prosperity as it is often an attainment by few



wealthy and privileged individuals could be redefined in the light of the Gospel message, Withrow adds, which commands love of God and love for neighbor as one love themselves (2007:28). Such would go far to help us align with the fact that human condition seeking for wholeness should take center stage in every salvific discourse and not an emphasis on right standing with God. Because emphases on “right standing with God earned through salvation, must yield or trigger the blessings of good health, prosperity, and wealth” (Golo, 2009:368) which is the norm within the circles of the prosperity gospel. Seeing that such conception does neglect the fact that the dignity of every person does not rely on material possession only but in accepting and valuing them as God’s image bearers. Moreso, holding that “liberation to be rich” (2009:371) which on the contrary sees poverty as one of the enduring principalities and powers that must be overcome by the redeemed would not speak of holistic salvation which this study holds.

In the quest to answering the research question was an overview of Mugambi’s theological contributions with an emphasis on reconstruction a new theological paradigm for African theology in the post-colonial era. With the therapeutic explorations and holistic applications, discourses including social reconstruction become relevant because social issues Mugambi observes “are the more severe because they have to do with infrastructure” (1995:161).

Following the end of cold war and its relevance for the postcolonial and post-apartheid Africa, Mugambi expanded on the changing global patterns in general, and in theological thinking particularly. The quest for change which Mugambi suggests relate solely to the regular usage of liberation as a theological model for Africa which in his thoughts would lead to “an ideological bondage” (1995:164). He rather sees to what would foster and maintain in a friendly way with all neighbors who could lead to “healing of wounds caused by hatred and bring harmony, peace, and tranquillity” (1997:166). Such is a theology that is living and contextual to immediate societal needs which also affirms Jesus’ mandate as to why Christian faith should bring about peace and goodwill amongst humankind (1995:164). Hence, resulting in the need for a theological thinking from liberation to reconstruction which Mugambi sees as a clear need in African theology today (1995:165).

The theology of reconstruction could lead to re-imagining the scope of viewing and significance therein attending to social constraints. Such is a challenge Mugambi says, calls for complete reliance on God other than on human wisdom (1995:165), thus the adoption of the reconstructive model of Nehemiah. For him, this figure serves post-colonial, and post-

apartheid Africa better such that “it gives us the mirror through which we can spot out our mission to remaking Africa out of all sort of ruins that continue to bedevil it” (Gathogo, 2009:100). Following from the triggers mentioned above Mugambi sees “reconstruction as indeed the key to the salvation of Africa” (Conradie, 2015:69).

Going through the research question this study tries to answer, we could easily suggest to include Mugambi’s theological proclamations as having greater contributions to make toward holistic therapeutic interpretations of salvation that are holistic. His concern with social reconstruction attests to the fact that “wholeness of life does not realize in the social, political domain alone, nor is experienced exclusively in the spiritual domain” (Mugambi, 2003:64). However, would include those and perhaps structural healing, emotional healing, liberation from oppression which would enhance the flourishing of lives in the society. This presents one of the roles of theology which he sees as to proclaim the good news that God liberates holistically, the socio-political and spiritual without any dichotomy.

These contributive thoughts and broadness of theological coverage concerning salvation could lead to two thoughts in respect to salvation. Firstly, the inclusiveness of different facets -socio-political and spiritual- portray what the ongoing study holds namely, therapeutic salvation whose nature is holistic. Secondly, it might have come with a variation comparing to what salvation entails within the confines of prosperity gospel who amongst many things, emphasizes on achievable successes as rights of an individual. While on the contrary, see sorrows, sickness, poverty, as what ought not to concern one who said to have experienced salvation (Oyedepo, 2005:16). For Mugambi, however, a theology which speaks of salvation “must respond to the joys, sorrows, hopes, and fears of the community of faith which the theologian represents” (1995:11). Seeing that most of our societies are full of people whose need for salvation does not relate to the lack of wealth or health -though as critical as they are. However, could just involve wiping away of tears of harassment, oppression on the weak, stretching a hand of love, listening to the plight of those restricted from freedom to create a conducive space. Thus making Christian theology very crucial to the social reconstruction of Africa (Mwaura, 2008:3) as that which should speak to structures that dehumanize and encourage such to imagine, instead, of making the society a hospitable place to flourish. Further, on the summary, we now focus on the second dialogue partner, Mercy Oduyoye and how her theology of salvation might have contributed toward addressing the research question this study raised.

Oduyoye's concern as we have noted above has to do with the quest for healing which goes beyond the mere absence of sickness but as that which encompasses other aspects of life. With such perception, she has indicated the areas where therapeutic salvation is relevant to addressing the issues of her concern. Firstly, she sees the oppression of women which denies them attainment to their God-given potentials, solely because they are females as reason enough for her to call for salvation from such conditions. The idea as to what the nature of such salvation entails goes beyond the conventional notion to 'be saved from sin' but as one which guarantees freedom to be fully human beings. The idea which has to do with the ability to feel the self-worth that could enhance living and expression of God's given potentials.

Secondly, Oduyoye sees acceptance of a woman in African which depends on biological fruitfulness as what should call for salvation. As an example of an African woman herself without a biological child, she expresses her experiences and what she has been the practice and understandings of other women with similar concerns. Understood elsewhere above, the salvation of an African woman depends on how many children she has, and such notions are used as means of oppressing women. As such, making it difficult for these women to flourish. Thus a call for the intentional change of such informal constitutions which favors only a segment of individuals in the society while at the same time being oppressive to others. Perhaps such kind of salvation entails coming out 'from' to live 'for' what one was meant to be, which speaks well of Oduyoye's soteriological analyses such that one could live with dignity and self-worth.

The result of such articulations leads Oduyoye to the description of what she understands as the salvation in the whole sense of the term. Speaking of the perception relating to revitalizing the self-worth of an individual – women in particular- Oduyoye emphasizes on the fact that salvation should involve what she coins as 'humanization.' A concept which connotes an idea of the harmony within oneself, the transformation of ones' state of being -particularly for the one whose dignity is abused thus leading to a holistic approach to health, perhaps salvation. For when the salvation involves the well-being of the entire self of an individual in her opinion, it means salvation in its whole, seeing that contrast to such notion denies the equality of both women and men (Oduyoye, 1996b:500). Perhaps it is within such scenario that some individuals end up becoming slaves to certain structures which could end them in activities erupting their selfhood.

A sharp reminder as to why creation in its entirety deserve equity and dignity in treatment would fall back to the essence of Christian theology and what it promises. It is interesting to note that an affinity was perceived between the gospel of Christ and the African worldview of the sacredness of life and the human attachment to life (Oduyoye, 1996b:501). That notion raised hopes for recipients of the gospel as it would enhance “fullness of life” (1996b:501) of the individuals. And not only for an individual but perhaps, “quality of life of the whole community” (1996b:501). Such notions made Africans to “become more conscious of the fact that life is lived in the presence of God” (1996b:501) which would imply the assurance in protecting the integrity of life. This attracted interest to “the gospel’s inclusiveness and wholeness, its care for the vulnerable and its affirmation of humanity’s dependence on God” (1996b:501) and to itself as well, thus suggesting a sense of togetherness which Oduyoye symbolizes to a family. The reverse seems to have been in practice in most Christian circles; perhaps the church whose interests has undertaken different dimensions. Instead of becoming safe spaces for the vulnerable who are depressed, oppressed, and those without peace it has become a place that supports such acts and in fact encourages their practice. Until such practices get corrected, and the church turns attention to the vulnerable, there is every tendency that cries for salvation would continue to abound.

As a paramount part of most societies, the family is used as a metaphor for unity and togetherness in the Christian communities. Part of the function of this family metaphor Oduyoye dictates to be a place within which its members feel at home with themselves, and every member is considered as important as others (Oduyoye, 1991:470). The uniqueness of this feeling at home, on the one hand, brings about “the promotion of full individuality” (1991:470) and on the contrary, could bring “alienation and exile” (1991:470) when members get to separate ways and views. The premise relating to uniqueness therein a family setting could further suggest how it becomes a living setting which enhances growth (Oduyoye, 1991:471).

In the discourse concerning wholeness, the above analogy could be significantly applicable in demonstrating what contains holistic approach to life. Taking, for instance, the making of most Christian societies, instead of adopting to principles of wholeness it has opted for fractious policies by implementing the rules of patriarchal family (Oduyoye, 1991:473). Such distortions have resulted to a point where “women bear no rule” (1991:473), thus seen as “incompatible with the salvation brought to all and the responsibility of all to be emissaries of Christ”

(1991:473). Such calls for healing where the desired therapy could only be accepting and making every individual feel belonged as in the family of Christ is in most cases missing. Forgetting that it promotes the growth of all into the fullness that they see in Christ to be a full representation of all Christ believers (1991:472). Because it is apparent to note also that this wholeness encompasses all aspects of human life such that it provides for all that makes for the wholeness of persons in a community (1991:474). To that end, suggesting the applicability of this understanding as not referring to an individual wholeness but collective wholeness. Thus, signifying the consistent efforts of Oduyoye in calling for the well-being of all especially, African communities where structural oppressions of different kinds affect mostly, the vulnerable such that their flourishing is restricted.

It is of utmost significance to note that Oduyoye's perception of salvation to a large extent involves wholeness of women from what could ascribe to systemic oppression and violence faced by them (Oduyoye, 1992c:314). Yes, on the other hand, she tries to speak of the salvation, perhaps the wholeness for all in the society. She does these while demonstrating the holistic approach to "ministry of justice" (1992c:315) seeing from the experiences of "terrible oppression, exploitation, and domination by men in their societies and from their churches" (1992c:314). These forms of experiences she understands as not affecting women alone but a common norm in most African societies, thus suggests why "women are working for the wholeness in the Christian community" (1992c:315). These are indications to show how Oduyoye's salvific explorations involve the quest for the wholeness of all persons and in different spheres of existence and perhaps, the society in its entirety. Such quests would often result in "the recognition of the integrity of humanity, the struggle for its wholeness and the integrity and wholeness of the earth, our home" (1989:194).

The fifth chapter thus focused on attempting the various concepts that could foster an understanding of therapeutic salvation. The term therapeutic as already explained involves the healing of different facets of life other than the just healing of physical illness. It includes the three concepts suggested which include transformation, reconciliation, and empowerment. These concepts though do not exclusively forms what therapeutic salvation entails, but to a large extent, they are part of it based on the broad understanding of salvation which we have taken already.

## **6.2 Prosperity as human flourishing?**

Despite what seems to be raising concerns with prosperity gospel's emphases on health, wealth, and success, something fascinating still stands out from this circle of theological viewpoint. Here the focus is to see how the concept "prosperity" could be integrated and understood as human flourishing. In efforts to bringing that argument into the discussion, a phrase from Gerrit Brand which sees 'prosperity as human flourishing' is the point of argument here.

In his theological explorations of salvation in African Christian Theology, Brand amongst many other concerns makes references to humanity as the sole goal of salvific discourses. Perusing through phrases such as 'human good' as the purpose of salvation, Brand focuses on the anthropological approach to analyzing the concept of human good as the "condition of the human person" (1999:196). Such assertion is also in line with Brand's definition of salvation already mentioned elsewhere above ( as something that affects human beings).

The view of human good which goes with salvific understanding in Christian theology generally, and in African theology, in particular, has been conceptualized in different ways. Firstly, Brand sees this idea of human good as consisting "of a certain kind of 'true' or 'full' humanity" (1999:197) which to him, that ideal of humanity is seen through an attainment of true or full humanity. Secondly, from African theologians with interest in the anthropological dimension of salvation, they see it as "making human beings acceptable in the eyes of God" (1999:197) which to them is the human good, thus making it a quest into salvific discourses. In fact, the third dimension which is the focus here is the view of human good from the perspective of the prosperity gospel, whose view of human good includes the physical proofs of wealth, health, and success which in summary called 'prosperity' – as already discussed elsewhere above. Perhaps the argument here narrows toward Brand's view of prosperity as human flourishing which would make an effort to seeing the positive dimension of the prosperity gospel's concept of 'prosperity' that has been under criticisms.

Brand takes his argument of 'prosperity as human flourishing' from two relevant terms familiar within the circle of prosperity gospel namely; health, and wealth/success as they are understood. Unlike the Western missionaries' perspective<sup>81</sup> of the term healing, Brand outlines from an African point of view that healing comprises "with all other aspects of life, and always

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<sup>81</sup> Who classified healing to the 'secular' terrain of the mission hospitals in accordance with the body-soul dualism characteristic of Western thinking (Brand, 1999:201).

has a religious dimension” (1999:201). It is this religious dimension of healing that demonstrates how African Christian theology places emphases on the well-being of both humans and societies – as already stressed elsewhere above in the study. To that end, Brand adds, “a religion that does not offer to heal cannot be regarded as a salvific religion” (1999:201).

That has received considerable attention amongst the proponents of prosperity gospel whose particular importance on health as regards to salvation so much that it demonstrate ones’ level of prosperity. The above view has become a concern which Brand says is the thoughts of African theologians to show how physical healing can be included in a Christian account of salvation (1999:201). Moreover, such concerns fall within the confines of prosperity gospel’s portrayal of salvation in healing terms. However, physical health as important as it is does not fill this overarching gap but has the incorporation of the second component namely, wealth/success which forms the next point of argument.

Following the influx of the gospel of prosperity in Africa, it has been observed to have contributed tremendously to the growth and spread of African Christianity<sup>82</sup> with their particular emphasis on wealth/success as to health above. Here it is significant to this study to outline that the prosperity gospel understands human good as wealth/success which is a pointer to a good life. Perhaps, considering Brand’s anthropological connection to salvation, and seeing what describes a good life to humanity entails, he could not hesitate to give such description a new translation. The last focus makes him conclude translating the idea of health and wealth from prosperity to instead “human flourishing” (1999:202).

From the above purview, and from prosperity gospel’s account of prosperity as the goal of salvation, it is of utmost significance to make some integrations. Firstly, to the prosperity gospel circle, since health and success are the goals of salvation, yet salvation should not be limited to those. Instead, the two concepts should be taken as part of what makes one’s salvation when taken from one aspect of what one needs salvation from. This could be taken further from the fact that what calls for salvation is not limited to becoming healthy or rich in a sense, but has other dimensions<sup>83</sup> which this study has tried to point out. Secondly, from Brand’s view,

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<sup>82</sup> See details of such from the section of this study that discussed prosperity gospel above.

<sup>83</sup> Nicolson, 1990:217 points out other dimensions of salvation which might not have so much to do with health and wealth. He says rather that “even Christians are not saved from lives of degradation, moral collapse and



the concept of health and wealth are seen as ‘prosperity’ which he qualifies as human flourishing (1999:202) carries some relevance to our quest for broader understanding of salvation. Health and wealth – as important as they are- should comprise to what makes part of the human ideal which he discusses in his anthropological dimension of salvation -though should not be taken primarily as what constitutes human quest for good- at least as part of what makes it up. So we could conclude with Brand to seeing prosperity as human flourishing when health and wealth are seen as proofs of one’s salvation, as the prosperity gospel hold, and also assume the two concepts as forming part of what makes up human flourishing as a whole.

### 6.2.1 **Salvation, a social construct?**

Culminating the argument for a holistic interpretation of salvation, it is of utmost importance to establish an integration between the two voices this study has had namely, Mugambi and Oduyoye. The fact to be established here has to do with the dimension which each of the two voices takes in a bit to interpreting salvation from a holistic sense with particular emphasis on the social aspect. The essence of the integration would help in striking some differences and perhaps, the similarities between the two scholars. To that end, we start with Mugambi with his emphasis on social and structural reconstruction as a pointer to understanding salvation in a broader perspective.

With his Theological concern covering Africa at the emergence of the twenty-first century, Mugambi considers focusing attention on a new theological paradigm – as already discussed elsewhere- namely reconstruction. This new approach is having to do with his concern over the usage of liberation which has been the model for and in African theology which he had described as ‘an old model’ that needs to under substitution with reconstruction ‘a new model’ (1995:49). Reconstruction, says Mugambi, would “help Africans to reaffirm their cultural identity and consciousness, and can provide a springboard for the revitalization of Africa’s economy, politics, and social life” (2003:37).

Considering salvation as having to do with human good -as Brand described- yet, not restricted to humans solely but also with societal restructuring whose starting point is the individual (1995:15). Just as the concept of reconstruction has to do with modifications of an existing

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brutality.” These and many other elements are among some of the major emphasis of this study which gears to understanding salvation from different spheres of human life.



structure, similar or same impact could be applied when discussing salvation. For instance, the holistic consideration of salvation comprising of different aspects of human well-being involve some forms of modification from one stage of existence to the other. As to reconstruction, Mugambi says, “it is done when an existing complex becomes dysfunctional” (1995:12). Such dysfunctionalities when viewed from other spheres, could be “feeling of guilt” (Nicolson, 1990:216) some of which might have been caused by “various kinds of anti-social behavior” (1990:216). Thus requiring restructuring which might have been caused by such acts of dysfunctionality to become activated for further constructive functioning.

The reactivation of these dysfunctionalities requires restructuring of mindsets which have the power of reframing new ways of inventing ideas. With social reconstruction as a paradigm, Mugambi suggests that “it has to begin with the reconstruction of attitudes and images” (2003:59). He sees images as part of what constitutes African cultural and religious heritage, thus contains the foundations upon which social reconstruction should be undertaken (2003:38). Such could be the conviction of Mugambi when he stresses further to challenge the Theology that is relevant in the Africa of the twenty-first century. He observes that for relevance, such theology ought to “accurately and comprehensively understand and re-interpret the social and physical reality of the continent and its peoples” (1995:40). In that way, the social transformation of both individuals and the society could attain some form of actualization. In other words, the structural dysfunctionalities of the old would be made in the new design, while some aspects of the old complex are retained in the new (1995:12). Such Mugambi describes as “reconstruction” (1995:12) which in the context of this study could be considered a form of social salvation.

Similarly, Oduyoye being another voice in the study has made significant contributions to understanding salvation in a broader perspective. With her emphasis basically on the well-being of women, Oduyoye is also very much concern with the state of affairs in the society which she attests saying “women are working for wholeness in the Christian community” (1992c:315). Such idea of wholeness Oduyoye would say “involves a confrontation with the powers of Church and state” (1992c:315) and the impact which the two forces have on human lives, in particular, Christian community. However, with the idea of the societal wholeness in mind, she describes such as involving “healing the women-men situation in Africa ....which could emanate the birth of an authentic African Christianity” (1992c:315). Perhaps, her concern which involves the Church is to present what she sees as one clear function of the Church in

Africa as “that of providing an active, supportive community for the people that are accustomed to living in caring communities” (1996b:498) which she probably misses. Such mission of the Church Oduyoye asserts, would include “participating in the struggle against patriarchy in all its deadly forms” (1996b:500).

However, to situate another view of Oduyoye’s perception of salvation as a social construction would demand attention to her involvements with the wholeness of society as much as that of the individuals. Looking at the issues with justice in African Christianity in particular, it is of much interest to understand that certain factors which attracted most Africans to believing have ceased to be in active practice. For instance, Oduyoye sees “sacredness of life, human attachment to life, and fullness of life” (1996b:501) as those whose value in the modern African Christianity is of less concern. Such has resulted in the loss of quality of human life which in turns affects the African society, as she claims (1989:195) which speaks of injustices to human life. Oduyoye, therefore, calls for a theology that should seek to sustain human life in Africa and calls such theology, “a vital theology” (1989:195). Such theology she claims does not focus on the human well-being but also the societal wellness. For such theology Oduyoye says, is capable “to animate the struggles against racism, political and economic instability” (1989:195) as those are factors amongst many others through which injustices of different kinds portrays. Thus leading to dysfunctionality in the society which presents the well-being of the inhabitants of such societies. That perhaps Oduyoye sees as a form of theology with immediate importance, and as one that is capable of invigorating and giving life and hope in a situation that could look hopeless to provide life in abundance (1989:195).

The two theologians above have described their assertions of salvation as a social construction. The perception that salvation should be considered as nothing but what concerns humanity solely could seem a myopic effort such that other elements outside and around human existence are not taken part. From the study thus far and the above engagement, it would be deduced that salvation goes beyond the scope of human well-being but stands to include other forms of creation. Mugambi and Oduyoye seemed to present such arguments valid in their theological assertions with a particular focus on salvation. They each have a passion for the well-being of individuals as much as they do for the society which could qualify their perceptions of salvation as a social construction seeing that it affects what happens to the larger society where humanity dwells.

## 6.2.2 Some Contributions and Recommendations

This study thus far has investigated and provided an affirmation on the significance of therapeutic understanding of salvation. The discourses in chapters three and four could be said to achieve a positive response to the leading research question. Nevertheless, it cannot be an exhaustive study on the subject matter, thus becoming necessary that there be open for possible progression with some recommendations. Thus few of those are summarized below.

The study thus far provides a significant theological input in thinking of both the place and reality therein humanity's various concerns with themselves, especially with regards to salvation theology. With the broadness therein salvation and all that concerns it, this thesis can only initiate discussions toward reconceptualizing salvation as healing and as that which encompasses, and assumes that more critical engagements will develop. Secondly, the thesis does not only provide a perspective for understanding salvation theology in general but more specifically, provides a salvation theology with an intentional motive to engaging real life situations of not human beings solely but non-human beings inclusive. In fact, with the idea of social reconstruction as a model of interpreting salvation, it provides and, thus expands the horizon of which discussions surrounding salvation occupies. These become invitations to a broader overview and constitutes the worth of human life such that the possibilities of attaining to flourishing lives from all dehumanizing actions are provided and guaranteed. Thirdly, salvation is seen in holistic terms and as therapeutic invites to dialogue with proponents of prosperity gospels and their interpretations of salvation. The understanding of the prosperity gospel having to do with the possession of material wealth and health as evidential to one's salvation is authentic but could be taken further. As the idea of 'holistic' salvation entails to comprise every aspect of human existence, it is crucial that it is not taken as a means to an end in itself as if all there is to salvation ends in the material possession. Rather, little or more investigations into why certain things are not happening to certain people but others should become very significant such that holistic mindset and therapeutic focus takes prominence in any salvific discourse.

## 6.3 Conclusion

This study can be concluded here, with all the discussions thus far. It is important to submit also that despite the volumes already written on salvation, there could always be fresh ideas and perspectives. This particular study could not make an exhaustive engagement on what

therapeutic salvation entails, but probably brings a perspective into which further research could take.

Salvation as important as it is in Christian theological discourses, its relevance covers every aspect of God's creation – both humans and non-humans. A careful study of current life realities, one notices that cries for liberation cover everywhere and on the increase daily. These are coming from different contexts with a variety of causes, yet, the idea of freedom from all that threatens to have life in its fullness is the norm. With that in mind, our idea of salvation ought to go beyond repentance from sin but perhaps much broader, as a kind of salvation required to bring about wholeness which should constantly remind us that there are people who are in need of salvation always. Irrespective of whether they have the assurance of salvation from sin or not, yet being in conditions where they cannot flourish should indicate that there is a need for salvation.

In a final note, therapeutic understanding of salvation has amongst other elements the capability of creating brand new communities, those of which have undergone the 'unmaking of several structures,' and gearing toward 'remaking of new ones.'

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